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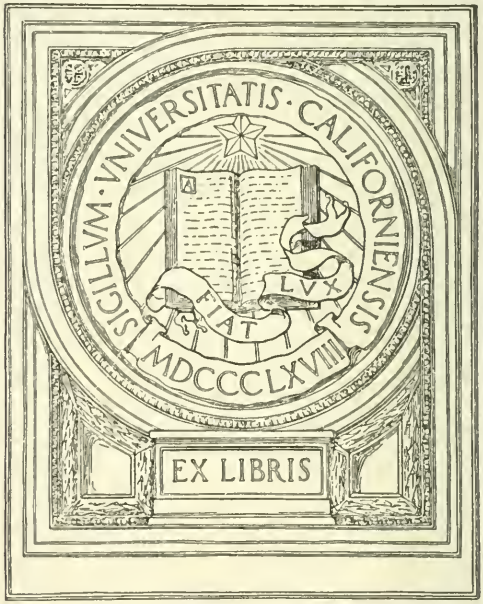

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THE CELTIC TEMPERAMENT

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD, LONDON

THE CELTIC TEMPERAMENT
AND OTHER ESSAYS
BY FRANCIS GRIERSON

LONDON: JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD
NEW YORK: JOHN LANE COMPANY
TORONTO: BELL & COCKBURN MCMXIV

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INTRODUCTION

SITTING one evening with the author of *Monte Cristo*, in his study, on the Boulevard Malesherbes, I was for the first time impressed by what might be called the personality of a free and experienced mind.

"You are a foreigner," he said, half indifferently. Then he added with some curiosity in his look: "You are very young"; and then, as if by a sort of intuition: "With your gifts you will find all doors open before you."

Dumas was now an old man. He had seen the world; but not as I was to see it. He began his career on the incoming tide of Romanticism; I was beginning mine on the incoming tide of Realism. But not as a writer; for I was too young to write about

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anything, nor did I bother myself about schools and systems. I lived in a world of illusions, impressions, and intuitions. I floated about, in and on these air-bubbles, at a time when von Moltke and Bismarck were concocting schemes for the overthrow of the Empire—the one stroke of destiny which was to usher in the school of Realism, make a pessimist of Renan, the optimist, and put Alexandre Dumas and Auber in their graves. Who could have guessed that with the descent of the Prussian eagles on Sedan, the great romancist would leave that *appartement*, with its life-sized figures from *Faust* painted on the walls, and its artistic associations, to die in the country, almost in distress, far removed from the Empire of poetic adventure?

From 1830, down to the time I mention, poets like Hugo and Alfred de Musset, novelists like Balzac and Dumas, impressionable natures like Chopin, found an element of romance in which to live and work. They

had a public. They were liberally supported, not by small groups, but by a nation, and beyond that nation by a whole world of culture. It was not a question of combating and development, but one of working and enjoying. They appeared on the scene, and triumphed from the beginning to the end; for even Hugo had the way prepared for him by the creative magic of Chateaubriand; and after Chateaubriand, Chopin was perhaps the only one who brought with him a unique creative force. Yet, strange and original as his personality was, he had a public waiting for him; he had no conditions to seek out and create. In his time, poetry, art, and emotion were one; sentiment, spontaneity, and enthusiasm, belonged to the age of romance; people listened or read from choice, not because of passing fashions and isms.

When, one year previous to the awakening at Sedan, I sat listening to the author of *Monte Cristo* explaining the spiritual state of

his mind, I little thought that in thirty years I should arrive at something like the same conclusions — but by experiences totally different. I arrived in Paris just as all the romance was fading out of art and literature; but I was not yet old enough to understand the things that were happening; so I moved along on the stream of experience under the illusion that society was full of poetry and romance. To me the world was a sort of dream, and through it I walked, a living but sealed book of illusions. My head was full of unwritten Arabian Nights adventure, and in my ignorance I imagined that the world was full of charming and generous people willing to aid art for art's sake, and to further truth for truth's sake. I walked and existed on the dividing line of romance and reality.

I had, for two or three years before meeting Dumas, "gone where I pleased"; and it was the facile success which I met with, and a half blind, half clairvoyant enthusiasm for

all the romantic mysteries of the world, which gave me courage to face every danger and defy every difficulty. As I sat listening to the wise talk of an old and celebrated man who knew the world, I realised his power and the extent of his fame without ever having read a page of his writings. I had never read a novel. The desire to read books of adventure had never once possessed me. A desire to see the world was born with me; it was an instinct. The idea of knowing the world from books had never entered my head, and at that time I thought every one felt as I did. Nor did I ever feel that what I was doing was at all uncommon. It seemed quite natural to go about alone in foreign countries, without funds in the bank to draw from, and without rich relatives to help me in time of trouble. To see, to hear, and to know the world for myself, that was the "instinct."

Fortunately my art did not assume the literary or plastic form, else I should have

given many useless impressions to the world about people, things, and incidents. A first impression is just as likely to be wrong as right, and in the case of youth much more likely to be wrong. I had begun at the very beginning with human nature itself in all its phases, from the simple bourgeois and the superficial boulevardier to the company of writers, musicians, artists, and courtiers. From the first, destiny never once permitted me to halt in the tent of any "set" or "school." Without trying or wishing I found myself *tour à tour* in the company of artists and artisans, poets and peasants, duchesses of the old Faubourg, and parvenus of the Champs Elysées; for such experiences are in the order of things when the world regards you as a "prodigy." In that case there is no need to take Goethe's hint to "give yourself out as somebody"; the world takes all that on to its own broad shoulders.

I had to take my experiences as they

came, according to the day and the hour, for I soon learnt that every forced effort was a failure. I no longer tried to meet any one. So suspicious did I grow with regard to forced meetings, that I often refused to meet people when I had reason to suspect something strained and conventional in the preliminaries. I early learned to wait. And while I went where I pleased, I seldom started on a journey to a strange land without a feeling that the time had come to make the experience. When the impulse seized me to go to Russia I gave way to it, and on my arrival found myself possessed of twenty francs and a feeling of security which bordered on indifference. I had not foreseen the hardships that awaited me there. Poverty and, indeed, hunger had no terrors for me in the early years. But in spite of my desire to know the world, there were countries I never cared to visit. When I was invited to the Cumberland Palace, in Austria, where were assembled the Courts

of Cumberland, Hanover, and Denmark, I began to realise how little of chance there is in the lives of some people, and how much of Destiny; and I value the souvenir presented to me on that occasion as symbolising one of the most romantic events in a long chain of romance.

So, too, I had never much desire to see Germany. To live in a city like Berlin, with its militarism and materialistic science, was not a pleasant notion; but at last I gave way to a sudden and imperative feeling to know Berlin, where to my surprise, I found a host of sympathetic people, my sojourn being interrupted by an invitation to visit the King and Queen of Saxony at Dresden, in which city I again thought of the prophetic words of the author of *Monte Cristo.* A dream within a dream was what life now seemed. Romantic and extraordinary incidents were occurring in such unlooked-for and divers forms that my reason was taxed to account for them. The writers and

artists of the romantic period past and gone attained the poetic mysteries of life by remaining in one place; Balzac, Chopin, Berlioz, and Georges Sand lived comparatively quiet lives. In an age of rank materialism I stood practically alone. There were whole weeks and months when a hearing seemed impossible, even in Paris, so dense had the artistic atmosphere become. People seemed intoxicated with the alcoholic fumes of *L'Assommoir* and the impossible scenes of *Nana*. Zola was the god in literature, Meissonnier the god in art, and music had sounded its last note with the death of Berlioz. Gounod counted for nothing; his *Faust* was composed during the Empire, and was now an old story. But not only in France, in all the other nations a spirit of cheap and machine-made art prevailed. Paris gave the tone to the whole world. Paul Bourget, Anatole France, Pierre Loti, Stéphane Mallarmé, Sully Prudhomme, had not yet risen into power. They were on the

way; but between them and the ante-bellum days a plain of Tophet stretched where a sacrificial altar to *La Bête Humaine* was erected by popular clamour.

Not till 1889 did the reaction against this *Bête Humaine* literature set in. In that year I published a book in Paris which contained an essay entitled "*La Révolte Idéaliste.*" I wrote that essay with a cool head, after duly considering all sides of the question, and in a spirit absolutely detached from any clique or school, for I belonged to none. It was that little book which brought me letters from Jules Claretie, Sully Prudhomme, Jules Simon, the Duc d'Aumale—to be precise, nine of the leading academicians, besides many signs of appreciation from members of the old aristocracy, such as the Duchesse Isabelle de La Roche-Guyon and the Comtesse Diane de Beausacq; from imperialists, the Princesse Mathilde Bonaparte and Prince Roland Bonaparte; from republicans and young socialists; from leading writers in Spain,

Italy, and Belgium; and notably from Maurice Maeterlinck. I could scarcely believe my eyes when I saw these tokens of better things for the future of art and literature. It was one of those surprises which come on the wings of romantic mystery. I asked myself how it was that I should be chosen for this work, unknown as I was to all these writers, without any following to support me, without so much as a friend on one of the journals to call attention to my book. I had to wait twenty years, every month of which was replete with some form of hard work, rude experience, mingled success and failure, and trials of every description. But, as I said before, I was my own world of romance. I tried to fathom the mystery of my own cycle of experiences, and I could get no answer but this: the things which we think we need are the things which our souls can do without, and the things which we think we can live without are the things which we need the most. What is it that

regulates and evolves all the incidents of life as if they had been planned and fixed from the beginning? I put away the hypothesis of chance when I saw the results of what at first looked like mere coincidence.

Had I been brought up in Russia, under the influence of Count Tolstoy, I should have become one of his most fanatical followers. Unremitting contact with the great world of action and international custom made it impossible for me to become the disciple of any master. My personal knowledge of the Russian character helped me to arrive at an estimate which otherwise would have required years of thought. I was twenty years in coming to a conclusion about Wagner's teachings and work. Musicians considered me a good type of the Wagner fanatic at a time when his music was denied both in France and England. But at last I heard *Parsifal* on his own ground, under his own conditions; it give me the one experience

which was lacking to form a definite personal judgment with regard to Wagner's music. My sojourn in Bayreuth did something more. It proved to me how much more potent spontaneous inspiration is than that which is written and printed. Improvisatore as I was, I had personal experiences among German friends and residents in Bayreuth which were worth more to me than all that had happened previously. The true magic is generated at the first contact of inspiration. But this instantaneous impression is only possible in the impromptu arts: oratory and improvisation. When we hear a great orator speak we receive the psychic power which comes with the first contact of thought; when we read the printed speech we get the form without the spirit—it has been stripped of the thing which made it vital When a musical inspiration is written, printed, and rehearsed, it can never have the same effect as one that comes to the hearers direct. Even a Bayreuth orchestra has to produce

Wagner's inspirations in a sort of phonographic way; they are simply repetitions. The psychic wave which produced them has rolled back and receded from our presence for ever, to pass on, perhaps, to some far invisible shore, there to assume another form and a fresh outflowing.

It was only after my sojourn in Bayreuth that the law of spontaneous contact was made plain to me. The spontaneous phenomena of life are the things which dominate the affairs of heart and intellect. At Bayreuth I put away the doubting, half sceptical, half convinced feeling as to my own gifts, a feeling that had possessed me all through my career up to this time, in spite of repeated successes. I now at last came face to face with the truth: the spirit is more potent than the form, the thing that is first heard more potent than that which is written; the force that arrives spontaneously dominates and controls all conventional forms of art and thought. The best that is written is still

only a small part of the inspiration and the man.

The first serious work I ever read was Comte's *Philosophie Positive*. In books I sought for thought, not romance; in life I sought experience, and got both romance and experience. The people who lead active lives are never great readers. The real dreamers through life are the bookworms. The world to them is a fairyland, a mystical panorama of illusions. Men of great worldly experience may have illusions, but they are never the illusions of the printed page. The reality is concrete, like the diamond; out of it flashes the white heat of the actual. Speaking for myself, I was always attracted to short essays, to letters, aphorisms, and maxims. We discover the real George Eliot in the aphorisms scattered here and there in *Adam Bede*, *Middlemarch*, and *Daniel Deronda;* the real spirit of Bourget and Stevenson in their essays; the real Flaubert and Georges Sand in their letters. In my

opinion it is impossible for an essay to be too short. I have always waited for what I call the concrete mood before attempting to write. A mere impression is not enough. I was powerfully impressed when I first heard Madame Yvette Guilbert, but several years passed before I felt in the proper mood to write the essay entitled "Modern Melancholy." Competent critics in England and France have assured me that I did not wait in vain; and the fact that I have succeeded in this and other efforts intended only for a limited public is all the satisfaction I can hope to attain in a world dominated by Cook's tours, experience bought by the mile, romance by the round-trip, and heart-throbs at so much per minute.

The horror with which some people contemplate cheap literature and cheap emotion springs from something deeper than mere distrust and misgiving. It is that all those who have faced the "ordeals" of life, who have resisted the temptation of suicide and

the abyss of insanity, who have been whirled through the maelstrom of modern emotions, and landed on solid ground, bruised but not broken, able to stand erect without splints or props, realise the danger of quick transit and quick learning. How many times have I not been contradicted by the man with a large banking account, who has seen the world through the windows of express trains, from the terraces of palatial hotels, and the point of view of the Chat Noir and the café chantant. Rich people labour under the illusion that they can purchase knowledge and experience as they purchase coronets and yachts. I have not yet been able to purchase anything of consequence with money except material comforts. Nor have I ever known a millionaire, among the scores I have met, who could add one iota to his store of intellect by purchase. All the practical knowledge of the world I possess came to me gradually through my own personal efforts. Had

Introduction

I travelled about with my pockets stuffed with bank-notes and letters of introduction I should now be as ignorant of the world as I am of the language of the Mandarins. When I first began to travel necessity compelled me to do without letters of introduction; later I refused to use them when I possessed them. If forced efforts in art are vain, forced meetings are both vain and misleading. For it cannot be denied that if a man of talent presents a letter of introduction to a rich man, the writer or artist will be shown a series of highly-coloured, conventional pictures of the rich man's surroundings, with those of his friends added. The stranger sits down to a conventional dinner, listens to opinions which are carefully weighed before being uttered, and sees faces only lit by automatic smiles. Such scenes make but a poor and weak imitation of real life. If, on the other hand, a letter of introduction is presented to a professional man,

in nine cases out of ten the incident proves but a source of annoyance to the one to whom the letter is addressed. We are tricked by the rich, and repulsed by the busy professional man.

The world contains, at this hour, thinkers, writers, and artists who can face the hypnotic regard of the minotaur without wincing, and there are still thousands of people who live and move in a world in which the fashions and assumptions of greed and materialism have neither influence nor control.

Just one year after my meeting with Alexandre Dumas I was at the residence of the late Viscountess Combermere, in Belgrave Square. It was on a Sunday evening, the 17th of April, 1870. As I sat there I could not help contrasting the company with the people I met at the residence of Dumas. There was still a glamour of art and romance in that company ; in Belgrave Square I found myself among wealthy, titled people, among

whom I could not discern so much as a glimmer of art, poetry, romance, or intuition. London seemed to me a place whence the soul had departed: it was ripe for a reign of literary materialism which was to last for twenty years.[1]

Paradoxical as it may appear, it is science that is now the most romantic and mystical thing in this matter-of-fact world. Wireless telegraphy, the transmission of thought, the double consciousness of mind, the dual capacity of the brain, the possibilities of intuitional achievement, have been revealed through the unfolding of scientific law. Out of a crude scepticism a force has developed which has, even now, given a death-blow to

[1] I dealt with many questions touching that period in a series of discourses delivered in 1880, and published in 1882:—"Materialism in Germany"; "The Influence of Modern Literature from a Spiritual Standpoint"; "The Future of China"; &c. (Sir Robert Hart, twenty years later, gave expression to sentiments in harmony with the leading views contained in the discourse on China.) The dialogue on *Macbeth*, published in *Modern Mysticism*, was also dictated at this time.

the old nightmare of materialism. We know too much now ever to sink back into that slough of despond. We have entered upon a new era, and victories will be gained by all who have eyes to see and ears to hear.

THE AUTHOR

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THE CELTIC TEMPERAMENT

THE CELTIC TEMPERAMENT

NOTHING could be more marked than the progress of philosophic and scientific absolutism which characterised the thought and teachings of the three greatest German thinkers of the past hundred and twenty years, beginning with Goethe and ending with Nietzsche. Goethe, conciliatory and authoritative; Schopenhauer, contradictory and imperative; Nietzsche, denunciatory and absolute.

The final effort to reach the pinnacle of absolutism was made in 1876, when Nietzsche erected the last ladder and set out alone to scale the dizzy heights of the imperative and the ultimate. To deny the force exercised by Schopenhauer is not only to deny the influence of Nietzsche, his successor, but to take a wrong view of Goethe, the first and

prime mover in the imperative cycle. Just as well might we attempt a denial of the power and influence of Cæsar and Bonaparte. But not only in Germany have we an example of the cyclic development of genius—we have just as striking an example in France, beginning with Chateaubriand, born in 1768, only nineteen years later than Goethe. In Germany there was an evolution towards the absolute, with a basic element of science ; in France, Chateaubriand was followed by Ernest Renan, and Renan by Pierre Loti, all semi-mystical Celts; but the progressive development here was towards a sort of resigned and literary pessimism. For Chateaubriand reentered the Church from motives purely sentimental and psychological, Renan left it from motives of intellectual liberty, while Pierre Loti finds it impossible to make his reason conform to sentiment.

What a differencc there is between the manner of the Teutons and the manner of

the Celts! The stentorian tones of the German thinkers are heard everywhere. Dramatic, militant, vehement, they command the world's attention as much as a great flood or a calamitous battle; but with the three French writers the manner of the thought is different. Here there are no trumpet calls, no serious attempts to lead men back into the known, or forward into the untried. They are silent forces. No one disputes about Chateaubriand, and the readers of Pierre Loti admire in silence. Nevertheless, the works of the three Frenchmen have a wide and permeating influence on thousands who take no interest in the three German philosophers. And just here lies the instructive part of the intellectual history of these later times. We are confronted with two currents of thought, coming from opposite directions, but merging into one stream, flowing towards the unattained and the nebulous. A kind of vortex is formed in which humanity is being whirled.

In it the débris of broken idols float, while above the surface are seen the souvenirs of the sanctuaries of Faith and Hope.

The three great Germans fought against the pessimistic idea by seeking relief in philosophy, science, and sociology. In France the genius of Chateaubriand found a vent in literature, romance, diplomacy, and travel; that of Renan in philological and historical research; that of Loti in romance and literature. Renan was always what Talleyrand said of Charles X., an unfrocked priest. The real Renan is to be found in his *Life of Christ*, and the real Chateaubriand, not in his *Genius of Christianity*, but in his *Mémoires d'Outre Tombe*.

The *Genius of Christianity* is the pleading of an emotional lawyer before a jury susceptible of emotional influence. It is all rhetoric. But in the *Mémoires d'Outre Tombe* Chateaubriand is at home. Here we see him as he is. The eloquence is natural, the pathos unaffected, the adventure en-

thralling, and the style impeccable. Here we have for the first time the Celtic temperament in all its complex charm, mystical depths, and that indefinable something which hovers over and around the real and the commonplace, and which adds an inimitable beauty to the sentiment and passion which so many feel but so few can express by tongue or pen. Perhaps the most striking qualities here are the dramatic power and the marvellous insight into human motives, in contradistinction to the mystical, poetic, and emotional parts of this great work. The beauty and power of a work like this remain as a sealed book to the readers of problem novels and humdrum philosophy.

There is not in all literature anything more vivid than certain portraits in these memoirs. Carlyle uses the mallet and the axe in hewing Mirabeau out of the revolutionary block. In Chateaubriand's hands we see the Mirabeau without the aid of rhetoric: "En sortant de notre dîner, on

discutait des ennemis de Mirabeau; je me trouvais à côté de lui et n'avait pas prononcé un mot. Il me regarda en face avec ses yeux d'orgueil, de vice, et de génie, et m'appliquant sa main sur l'épaule, il me dit: 'Ils ne me pardonneront jamais ma supériorité!' Je sens encore l'impression de cette main, comme si Satan m'eut touché de sa griffe de feu."

Chateaubriand was an artist, in the sense in which Goethe uses the word art. Seeing, hearing, and understanding were one with him. "Discernment," says La Bruyère, "is the rarest thing in the world." It is the rarest thing because it accompanies the highest condition of the critical faculty, and cannot be acquired. It is perhaps the pre-eminent quality of Celtic genius. To distinguish at a glance, and apply the fitting word and phrase, to penetrate beneath the surface to the core of the apparent, to discriminate between gold and gilt, between natural gifts and acquired knowledge, to

judge without waiting to ponder over bulky tomes for months or years, until the mind has dissipated the force of the first impression, to go straight, as if by magic, to the inner meaning, and clutch at the very heart of the usurping mediocrity—these things Chateaubriand did, and these things have made him immortal. His Celtic thought was framed in a Latin mould, and while Goethe and Carlyle had to become classics by a gradual ascent of appreciation, the author of *Mémoires d'Outre Tombe* was a classic as soon as the work appeared. What distinguishes this work from all others of the kind is its multiplicity of moods. When people write memoirs, the writing too often partakes of the photograph and the phonograph. The greater part of such work is made up of souvenirs set down in cold blood, with little style and no imagination. To seek for any sign of passion or inspiration would be futile. This is why no lasting human interest attaches to the memoirs of "distinguished" diplomats

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and statesmen in these days. In the *Mémoires d'Outre Tombe* the charm resides in the impression conveyed by its moods; the fascination, in the union of impression and style. The secret of this complexity of moods lies, once more, in the Celtic temperament. No other temperament equals it in dazzling paradox and bewitching anomaly. You think you have at last posed the author for an exact likeness of himself, when click! before the picture is taken the expression has changed and you have a likeness of a person you scarcely recognise. As well might we try to photograph the other side of the moon as to attempt to analyse and fix a personality like this. The quality of the moodal temperament is the very touchstone of genius. All lovers of Goethe and Beethoven know what moods meant in their lives. And Schopenhauer says: "That which distinguishes genius, and should be the standard of judging it, is the height to which it is able to soar when it is in the proper mood and finds a

fitting occasion." When writers like Georges Sand and Emile Zola spin off a regular number of pages every day we know with certainty to what category such work belongs. Facility is not inspiration, as Joubert says; nor can merely brilliant and humorous outbursts produce an impression as vivid and powerful as that produced by the passionate concentration of the intellect and feelings on a single theme on a special occasion. It is not easy to produce excellent work, even when genius is ready and anxious, for the reason that a mood is not to be induced to order. There is nothing so delicate and complex. Its duration is short, like certain flowers that come and go in a day, or others that bloom in the night at long intervals. This is why a written speech is never so effective as an impromptu one, if the speaker be of the proper temperament and in the proper mood. Such moments possess immortality. They contain the double spirit of time and eternity. On these occasions

the higher forces of nature combine to produce the magic unity of art, beauty, and inspiration.

The Celtic temperament is as much apart from all others as the temperament of the Latin races is from the Teutonic. The character of the Celt is inscrutable in its complex subtlety, endowed as it is with the faculty of absorbing the quintessential learning of the world without any loss to personality. The moods of this temperament are akin to the changes and fluctuations of nature, because so intimately related to the physical elements seen and felt in daily life—the rolling of mists across bleak and barren hills at seasons when the soul is longing for light and sunshine, and when the human instinct rebels against the inevitable and the incongruous; the beating of seas against rock-bound coasts which present an appearance as bleak and unrelenting as the surging waves themselves; sudden showers on fine summer days, which im-

press the mind with the close relationship between physical law and spiritual life, between the joys of living and the burden of thinking, between illusion and reality, and the vast, mysterious realm bounded on one side by the sensuous and the real, while on the other there is no limit to the mystic and the imaginative.

In literature, the Celtic temperament is characterised by imagination, sentiment, and an indefinable sense of poetic mystery; but the style produced by these qualities is marked by intense personality—a style which, like all passionate and poetic art, is individual and spontaneous, because melancholy and passion create their own figures and symbols, and refuse to be confined within the limits of imitation.

It has been the habit of the drawing-room snob to dub with the epithets "fickle" and "insincere" a whole nation noted among experienced and competent minds as one of the most conservative in Europe. The

wonderful law of compensation may be seen here, as elsewhere; and that other force, that endows a people with immortality while starving on a dung-heap, which turns the fumes of wretchedness into halos of light and aureolas of glory! Fire and famine, injustice and misrepresentation have been the material portion of the Irish Celt. His capital is ruled by Protestants born in Ireland, while Scotland is Protestant governed by Presbyterians. Indeed, the strife going on in Scotland is neither political nor social; it is, in reality, the struggle of temperament against intellect. The renascence of Scottish humour is the bursting of a sentimental bud on the hard tree of metaphysics. The inventors of this pleasant antidote have calmly weighed the doses and calculated the effect. This medicine is not intended to act as most antidotes of the kind: it does not make the patient ill; it is a cordial remedy. Its action is on the heart. If Calvinism has made the Scotch mind more metaphysical

than æsthetical, the symbols of Catholicism have helped to keep the Irish character mystical and poetic. Scottish humour is always accompanied by a smile of sadness, delicate and pathetic, in spite of a rugged demeanour—sunshine on the summit of Ben Nevis in November! Sentimental and critical, it belongs to the ethical mood. The mind is always a little more positive than the heart, the philosophical spirit a little more pronounced than the sentimental. And Irish humour! A ray of light in the haunts of the banshee; a burst of temper in the inverted mood of pity and tenderness. The seeming levity is not a sign of cynical indifference. It is distracted compassion.

The Celt speaks of Nature with a kind of mystical authority. The Celtic mind, at its best, becomes identified with Nature. It becomes one with the modes, conditions, and symbols of natural things. Other minds cognise the beauties and the forces of Nature, but rarely penetrate to the core of the thing

seen; they depict and appreciate the outward appearance of trees, meadows, rivers, and mountains; the Celt speaks for them, interprets the appearance, turns the material form into a spiritual atmosphere, explains the mystery of shapes and shadows, light and darkness, sensation and sound. To the ordinary mind the four seasons mean nothing more than change in health or variation in the conditions of bodily comfort; to the Celtic mind every day, every month, every season has its soul as well as its visible atmosphere.

"Un caractère moral s'attache aux scènes de l'automne," says Chateaubriand; "ces feuilles qui tombent comme nos ans, ces fleurs qui se fanent comme nos heures, ces nuages qui fuient comme nos illusions, cette lumière qui s'affaiblit comme notre intelligence, ce soleil qui se refroidit comme nos amours, ces fleuves qui se glacent comme notre vie, ont des rapports secrets avec nos destinées."

The poet-seer does not give us a mere

impression, a definition of something felt exclusively by himself, but he interprets the meaning of autumn in language which artists and poets will recognise as one of marvellous simplicity in style and profound penetration in thought.

To the superficial student Nature is a sealed book. The quasi-poetic mind can never be made to comprehend the relation that exists between Nature and man. "A landscape represents a state of the soul," says Amiel; but it requires a writer with a soul to say so. Out of twenty persons who may admire a landscape, hardly one has any idea of the psychological relationship of colour and form with the mental state of the beholder. In Nature, as in art, people are most attracted by the trivial and the insignificant. Few can feel and appreciate the ensemble of light, colour, shadow, and form manifest in the visible world in any place or season. Goethe's descriptions of Nature pertain to the scien-

tific; Rousseau's to the sentimental. When Versailles was built, trees and shrubs were rounded, squared, trimmed, inverted according to a regular system. The gardener did his best to hide Nature in the artificial; and the mock dignity of the Court accorded well with the hideous contortions in the name of art. It was classicism gone mad. It required a whole age of civil and philosophical revolution to overthrow this mountain of shams. If Rousseau advised a homely appreciation of Nature, Chateaubrand unveiled it, and, for the first time, spoke of it as one acquainted with the mysteries of earth and sky, forest and sea. He speaks of the constellations as only a great poet could speak: "A mesure que sur mon rivage natal la lune descend au bout du ciel, elle accroît son silence qu'elle communique à la mer; bientôt elle tombe à l'horizon, l'intersecte, ne montre plus que la moitié de son front qui s'assoupit, s'incline et disparait dans la molle intumescence des

vagues. La lune n'est pas plutôt couchée qu'un souffle venant du large, brise l'image des constellations, comme on éteint les flambeaux après une solennité."

This is the poetic and mystical impression of this part of Nature; but the same object inspires Pierre Loti with sentiments which oppress by the force of the inexorable and the scientific: "Là-bas, au-dessus des montagnes de l'Est, un large disque rose, d'un rose de sang, commence à surgir, et la lune, montrant sa figure d'eternelle morte, rejette mon esprit dans l'abîme des temps, dans l'insondable des origines—et tout ce leurre de foi, qui m'avait un instant bercé dans le tranquille cimetière, s'évanouit devant l'apparition rose. En vérité cela opresse, de songer qu'elle y est et qu'elle y sera toujours, inévitable, aux mêmes heures montrant sa face lépreuse et sans vie, sorte de scorie immonde attachée à nous et dont rien, aux siècles des siècles, ne nous pourra plus débarrasser jamais."

Pierre Loti represents the Celtic imagination keenly alive to the mandates and interpretations of modern science. In his pages there is as much reality as romance, and a sense of the inevitable is manifest through all his writings. The British Celt is less frankly outspoken. His pantheism abides under the symbols of Catholicism, or it is subdued by the weight of social majorities. Nevertheless, as the immortal author of *Mémoires d'Outre Tombe* says: "Let the young generations await in hope; there is a long period yet before arriving at the end."

Nature possesses the secret of turning dreams into realities. Out of the West come the sounds and the symbols of a great revival. A knell has been tolled for the old order of apathy and prejudice; the new dispensation will conciliate national animosities, and offer compensation to the genius and the language of an almost forgotten people.

STYLE AND PERSONALITY

Style is the physiognomy of the mind, and a safer index to character than the face.

SCHOPENHAUER.

EFFECTIVE wisdom begins with style. For style is the rhythmic sense applied to literature. With this sense idea and form are engendered in the mind as one. It means harmony of thought and movement. A perfect idea is conceived in the mind as a force which perpetuates itself in other minds by vibratory waves of rhythmic motion. The immortal part of literature resides in this harmony. As a dance without harmonious movement has no charm, so an idea without style has no force.

Style, in the hands of a practical thinker, may be likened to drill and dash in the army of a great leader. It has a subtle movement

and a vigorous spring. There is in such a power an affinity between action and intellect.

If a true definition of style is impossible, it is on the other hand an easy matter to tell what style is not. There is a kind of writing which hides the natural sentiments, as certain garments hide the natural shape of the body. An unnatural manner of writing and speaking leads directly to simulation. No man can imitate another and remain true to himself. The dignity of Milton was innate and unaffected, but in recent times a spurious sedateness has become fashionable; an assumed tranquillity which is destructive both to power and personality. A studied and calculated reticence is now a recognised synonym of simulation. And there is a tendency to express no emotion frankly, to admit only the half of what one feels, and about a fourth of what one thinks. There are people foolish enough to suppose that prose is, for some unaccountable reason

freed from the exigencies and principles that govern the world of poetry, music, and art. Now, the test of a picture is to be found in the quality of the impression it produces on the minds of competent artists, the test of a poem is to be found in the depth of the impression it produces on the minds of the poetic, and so of music, and so of prose. The question resolves itself to this: What impression do you carry away with you from a picture-gallery, a concert, a novel, a chapter of history, or a page of criticism? Macaulay, for example, leaves no marked impression, and his readers take nothing with them. No writer lived so long, wrote so much, and said so little. His great essay on Bacon is in reality a bundle of moral platitudes reeled off the rhetorical loom in the orthodox drab of the typical cotton-spinner. The texture is of cotton, and the silk-mercer finds it of no use. A little more and the same could be said of Samuel Johnson. This writer was saved by the

social and daily cares which surrounded him. There is a humour which is akin to sorrow. Effective sarcasm is the offspring of bitter experience, and monotony is the mother of mediocrity.

Evasiveness can possess no style, no matter how many other virtues it may have. When the manner is evasive and the spirit *ondoyant*, the result is barren.

It is difficult to fix the starting-point of this decadence in English literature; but, consciously or unconsciously, Thackeray capped the climax of inverted moods. His writings are the history of an inverted temperament. His novels are a development of emotional satire. No one was more emotional, more nervous. It is evident that Thackeray accomplished the miracle of living in one mood and writing in another. Consider his treatment of Charlotte Brontë on the occasion of that author's memorable visit to the Thackeray home. He slipped out of the house and hurried to the club,

leaving his guest unable herself to deal with the exigencies of the occasion. This incident was the result of habitual moodal suppression. It was Thackeray's business to save the evening by some sign of humorous sentiment, some natural flow of emotional feeling, even to the simulation of feeling.

When we stop to ponder over these things, the present decadent state of society is not so mysterious and unaccountable as it would appear to many. Thackeray's life was sterilised by cynicism, and the inversion cut him off before his time. Dickens gave vent to his emotions in many ways, and succeeded in being natural. For this reason the style of Dickens possesses a charm denied to that of Thackeray.

Even in that day the club was the place of refuge. Instead of conversation at the home dinner-table, or a social evening with a few friends before the homely fireside, the pose, the gossip, and artificial life of the club had become the proper thing. Talk took the

place of conversation; humour and persiflage the place of style. For at the club a writer was supposed to suppress all show of feeling. At this human abattoir an author was, even in Thackeray's day, stripped of his personality, and horns and hide disappeared in the democratic crematorium which reduced the habitué to so much dust and ashes. No man can elbow himself into a crowd, and remain there, and be free. With the advent of the modern club serious conversation was no longer possible. Epigram and witty evasion became the correct thing. Impromptu opinions took the place of calm judgment expressed in the course of an evening's *tête-à-tête* before a cup of coffee or a bottle of unadulterated port. For in Thackeray's day English drinks were masculine; they are now feminine. It requires all the wit of some writers to hide the ravages of tannic acid poison; and to do this a new art had to be invented. The effects of insomnia had to be veiled by

simulated repose and *bonhomie* — a most difficult and thankless accomplishment, for all the other sufferers recognise the trick. Thus, what looks like envy, is in many cases the result of neurasthenia. Writer's cramp is nothing compared with writer's irritability. Carlyle and Thackeray were perhaps the greatest sufferers and the greatest sinners; but immunity from the uric acid diathesis is a question of temperament, like everything else. Authors who suffer from "nerves," and who subsist on nerve-racking ailments are to be pitied. Style, therefore, to be fostered and maintained, means living as near as possible to the central source of naturalness and simplicity. Hurried talk, choppy conversation, puerile gossip, fashionable dinners, afternoon teas, and receptions, are inimical to a man's personality, the harmony of his thought, and his natural manner of writing. Gossips enter into the lives of serious writers like the Bedouin robbers on the path of a well-stocked

caravan. The drones of the working world rob the thinkers whenever an occasion offers. Indeed, much of what passes for comfort and progress, for sociability and good-humour, are devices of the incompetent to lure the unsuspecting and independent mind to a levelling ground of mediocrity. Amongst literary people twenty persons constitute a crowd, and thirty a mob. Is it any wonder that the Hardys and the Merediths, the Ruskins and the Stevensons get away as far as they conveniently can from the mad carnival of dyspeptic riot and absurd blending of teas and temperaments which London now supplies? Personality and style are an inheritance and a possession, and should not be bartered for a mess of pottage, nor be discussed across the boards of Mammon's banquets, between the latest musical comedy and the last melodrama at Drury Lane.

HEBRAIC INSPIRATION

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SOME words have souls, some have spirit, and some have only form. The Hebrew prophets possessed the soul of language; in modern poetry we have more of the spirit and the form. What renders the inspiration of Isaiah so potent is the mystical meaning attached to the Hebrew vocabulary. This language was and still is a medium for the invocation of the untold and inscrutable forces of Time and Eternity.

In the mystical languages, such as Hebrew and Arabic, there is a close affinity between the prophetic utterance and the mode of ancient music. Words and music contained something magical. The prophets seemed to possess the soul of music as well as the soul of words. "The Spirit of God will come upon me when the musician plays,"

cried Elisha.[1] The spirit of Time seems identified with recent modes of speaking and writing. There is something transitory in the moods evoked by rhyme. For rhyme shimmers on the surface of language like sunlight on the surface of shallow streams; it conducts the mind as in a circle; its sphere is a world of harmonic delights. Rhyme is to the minds what sentimentality is to art. The Hebrew prophets immortalised sentiment by a process the secret of which came into the world with the race and the language. The art they displayed was one of unconscious form; it arrived in the consciousness as a part of the unity of a spiritualised harmony. When we read Isaiah we are influenced by the potential elements of loftiness, and we become part of the sublime and the eternal. The prophets and seers not only possessed the faculty of discernment, but they were receptive as well; for it is not enough to see;

[1] 2 Kings iii. 15.

one must both see and possess to be able to explain and pour out. Receptivity is even rarer than discernment; for the state of receptivity cannot be attained without a union and acquiescence of all the loftier forces of will and reason. When religion became intellectual it lost its qualities of adhesion and unity. Spirit and form forbade the transmission of spiritual force by transcendental intuition. Western art, like Western religion, has defeated the aims and gone beyond the first principles of art. Artifice has taken the place of simplicity, and pedantry the place of naïveté; and the scourge of the modern academy has made naturalness and inspiration all but impossible.

When we read a chapter in Isaiah, or Job, or Solomon, and then turn to the utterances of our greatest preachers, the truth becomes apparent that we have lost the gift, if we ever possessed it, of attaining the supreme through the simple. Superfluous rhetoric,

sentences devoid of soul, and words devoid of passion, vain attempts to attain the sublime through tortuous paths of weary phraseology, these things we find, with frequent displays of learning, without real feeling.

Since Burke, we have no orator who has been able to fuse discernment and sublimity. For when we are sublime we cease to be clairvoyant, and when we see clearly we become didactic. No man can create his language; he has to choose it. In the English language style is the rarest of all things, because to write and speak in this tongue, even with moderate decorum, requires as much care as it does to cross a muddy road without soiling one's boots. The language is a mixture of vulgarity and sublimity, the Anglo-Saxon predominating, the Latin cropping up here and there to give dignity and architectural proportion. So that we must do with our pens what we do in the streets—pick our way with ex-

ceeding caution. Isaiah did not create the Hebrew which he used. He found it when he came into the world. It was there as a mould for his inspirations and his wisdom. Similarly, Mohammed found the Arabic ready to hand, and when he opens the Koran with the dulcet strains: *El hamdu lilla hee rabee il Allah mina,* we are as much thrilled with the verbal magic as we are with the divine strains of the great movement in Beethoven's symphony in C minor. Modern speech has become vivid and penetrating; it is rarely vivifying and exalting. Hebrew is the principal tongue in the hierarchy of languages, the mother of profound and exalted emotions, the most primitive and authoritative medium for the expression of transcendent praise and ineffable sorrows. By it, imagination soars through the ages, and we alight on the summits of Israel overlooking the sacred precincts where Elisha prophesied while the minstrel played and where the Ark of

the Covenant was carried to Jerusalem by the hosts of David. There are words which hold the mind to earthly things, to the temporal, the ephemeral; others, which deal with fixed periods; and lastly, the ones which set the soul free, give it wings, sight, and volition. These last are the words which contain a magical combination of sense and sound, as when the Mussulman cries: *La illa ella Allah, Mochamed rossoul Allah!* Here thought and language become vital, and the meaning penetrates like a musical phrase to the very marrow of consciousness.

Everything superfluous in language is either impertinent or puerile. A mixture of the metaphysical and the æsthetic is fatal to any precept of established wisdom. With a multiplicity of gods, the Greeks were confounded by a multiplicity of schools. No one could tell what new system would spring forth on the morrow. With every god came a new temple and a strange

teaching. Disciples contradicted their masters in almost everything. The truth is, the wisdom of the Greek teachers was not concentrated ; they were simple and direct only in the drama, and even here the effort and the inspiration tended towards the scrutiny of the unknowable. The tragedians exhausted themselves on the unattainable. The Greek mind seemed always a little above the level of human needs and opportunity. In the search for the beautiful and the sublime they forgot the world and the people in it. And this is why the Greeks had no Bible of their own, no book of Psalms, no prophets or seers. The grandeur of Israel is that the prophets and the singers all spoke with one voice. There are no discords, discussions, contradictions, or schisms. From the time that Moses descended from Sinai with the ten commandments, to the last recorded prophecy, there is but one spirit, one impulsion, one source and aim animating the whole. It requires no stretch

of the imagination to think of Moses as being the author of Solomon's *Proverbs.* It is impossible to controvert the laws of the first, or dispute the precepts of the second. And equally so, the character and tone of the seers agree, from the greatest to the smallest. The transition from this unity to the vanity of Greek metaphysics is both disappointing and disconcerting. Among the Greeks we find a free play of fancy in every sphere of thought, without the essential stamina of wordly wisdom and religious aspiration. Every man had his own little world of imagination and theory, and the result was philosophical and religious disintegration. The philosophical disputes which arose in the time of Plato and Aristotle increased in intensity until the end of the Roman Empire. With the Renaissance came a revival of scholastic disputation which has continued ever since.

Three things characterise philosophy, as we know it—abstraction, inversion, and con-

tradiction. The main object of a system is to destroy the foundations of the preceding system. There is not so much inharmony among Christian sects as there is among the diverse schools of philosophy. If all the philosophical works since Solomon's time were bound in one volume, the proper title of the book would be: "The History of Intellectual Folly." We are told that philosophical disputation is good for the mind. But we know for a certainty that the disciples of Plato never change, just as we know that argument has never changed a disciple of Aristotle. If inharmony is good for the intellect, just as much so would be the presence in the house of a drunken man or a brawling woman. Stubbornness is the mother of disputation. Thinkers who love the subtle, the vague, and the polemical, are superfluous in the economy of our social universe, because they wander from the centre of the knowable, pass out of the orbital sphere, and enter the region of the

nebulous. Removed from the centre, intellect becomes eccentric, folly whirls in centrifugal disorder, and is finally swallowed up in regions beyond the Central-Sun of knowledge. Vanity and vexation of spirit are the end of philosophical discussion, as they are of personal ambition, riches, and individual strife.

In the writings of the Hebrews humanity is divided into two sections—the good and the wicked, the wise and the foolish. And the maxims are concrete. Let any intelligent man read *Proverbs* and *Ecclesiastes*, and he will have to conclude that there is nothing new under the sun save a few mechanical inventions which have added nothing to the essential wisdom of the human mind. For what was true of old is true now, and the fatal blunder lies in concluding that our mechanical inventions bring us more happiness and better inspirations. The Jews on the one hand, and the Celts on the other, are awakening to a

fresh appreciation of the realities of life. But the Israelite never lost the sense of unity embodied in the sacred writings of his ancestors. Here and nowhere else, lies the explanation of the cohesive power of the modern followers of the Prophets; for in spite of the decadence of Jewry, from covetousness. there exists a vital spark of the old inspirations which has helped to enlighten and illuminate the remnants of Israel everywhere. The covetousness of the Jew is no new thing; the Old Testament is full of lamentations and warnings concerning this vice. While Israel endured as a nation there were but two social elements—the wise and those who followed them, and the fools, with their followers. When men like David and Solomon ruled and taught all was well; when the superstitious and the ignorant were in power all went wrong. How does it come about that the teachings of such men are venerated wherever people have any judgment left,

in every denomination throughout the world where the Bible is read? There is but one answer—because of the enduring harmony and fitness of the things uttered.

The fool, with his empty words, his ephemeral enthusiasms, and volatile anger, the rush after signs and wonders by the half-cultured, the hair-splitting disputations of the self-sufficient, the vanity of false systems and false gods, absurd hopes and ridiculous ambitions—there is not a person or a thing, an ambition or a passion, that is not depicted here by a lightning-phrase, as if shot from the quiver of infallible wisdom. Nowhere else is there so much comfort in so small a space. The maxims uttered are living, applicable precepts for believers and sceptics alike; for the thing that happened yesterday is the same that happens to-day, and the thing which will happen to-morrow will be like that of to-day; time and eternity are one; nothing shall change from the beginning to the

ending of the world. There is a temporal wisdom and a wisdom of infallibility. Open the book of *Proverbs*, and you will meet the infallible on every page: subtle world-knowledge, clairvoyant penetration, a seeing through appearances, an unravelling of petty passions and cunning avidity, a searching out of the false, and a ruling for the simple and the true;—all the knowledge of the Greeks and the Romans seems but an attenuated imitation of the simplicity and sublimity of Israel. Those who think the human heart has changed can do no better than read certain portions of the Old Testament. All through Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, David, and Solomon, the things described and the laws laid down might have been rendered by a seer or a philosopher of yesterday, so modern is the applicability of the visions, the examples, and the maxims. This is one reason why the Bible is the most popular book extant. It is both a surprise and a comfort to know that Jeru-

salem, the sacred City, was no better or worse than the great capitals of the world to-day. Jewish prophets and historians tell us all that is worth knowing about Jerusalem ; and we have it all with us to-day—the same money-lenders, the same oppressors of the poor, the same "folding of the hands to sleep," the same hypocrites, the same mischief-makers, the same drunkards, and the same gossips who poison the air of peaceful homes and spread mischief from neighbour to neighbour.

It is difficult to say what one admires most in the wise sayings of the Hebrews. We lean, now to the beauty of the symbols and the arrangement of words, now to the knowledge of the human heart, the precision, the simplicity, the scientific certainty of the thought. The pestle and the mortar are both concrete; and between them illusion is precipitated from reality. Isaiah and Solomon strip the human frame of illusions as a gust strips a tree of its rotten fruit.

Between the wisdom of *Proverbs* and the inexorable scrutiny of *Ecclesiastes* there is nothing left. Beside the residue of Solomon's smelting-pot, Attic understanding seems like dross, and Buddhism like smoke and vapour. All other literature goes above, around, or beneath the actual, dallies with theories, soars on chimerical wings, or enters dreamland by the portal of vain desires and vanished hopes. We hear the beating of the wings of the world against the gates of Destiny; but the Preacher of Jerusalem makes straight for the things that are. One by one he divests himself of the garments of illusion. In his wisdom and folly he becomes the prototype of the human race. His words are a paradox of terror and consolation.

There is this to be said about Truth: different peoples arrive at it by different methods. Job, Isaiah, Solomon, were not long in finding the shortest road to the meaning of life. The wisest Jew lived five

hundred years before the wisest Greek, and about six hundred years after Moses. That all this wisdom was attained at that epoch of the world's history may well fill the modern mind with perpetual wonder.

At the end of it all, work and right living are the only means of obtaining peace and contentment. And this, at last, after three thousand years, is what is left us.

PRACTICAL PESSIMISM

PRACTICAL PESSIMISM

JUST as Herbert Spencer did his work during the latter half of the nineteenth century, so Schopenhauer accomplished his during the first half. With a patience and assurance which borders on the superhuman these two thinkers waited and worked, unmindful of worldly distinctions and meaningless titles. But here the resemblance ends. For to speak of the great German at all means a direct and trenchant descent into the very heart of the things that are. He compels us to put aside mere sentiment and belief, and come at once to the reality. Herbert Spencer's position was that of a great thinker who hoped for a better world. He was an evolutionist who believed that through the slow process of evolutionary law society will some day arrive

at a plane of co-operative harmony. And he was right, from his point of view. Notwithstanding this, the Spencerian philosophy is pessimism with an optimistic veil. Like hundreds of other thinkers, illusion compels him to hope, and his hope takes the form of evolution. But, while it is a fact that the world is being developed under evolutionary law, there is not the shadow of evidence that individual man will ever be much better than he is. History and experience tell us that there never will be individual perfection; but illusion—which is a natural but necessary element—impels us towards this perfection. There are paradoxes that are divine. As far as we can now see, evolution means that species of change which brings with it new illusions—the actor with many masks, the conjurer with many devices, the three sirens with modern melodies: science, hope, and harmony.

It is idle to deny that in the writings of the greatest thinkers the most striking lesson

to be gained is that of the continuity of the pessimistic instinct; but every age has its particular mode of expressing human tribulation, folly, and illusion. In everything development mounts upwards by regular stages, the last expression in the ladder of progress being the most favourable, but never final. For we shall not reach finality till the last flicker of hope goes out on the shores of Silence and Eternity. Hebrew pessimism was sentimental and religious, and weeping is mentioned frequently all through the Old Testament. The pessimism of Greece was philosophical and poetic. The Greeks began to look at Destiny with a sort of mystical science. The pagan Romans became stoical, and never wept; but the Christians of decadent Rome became ecstatic and mystical, and a suppressed joy tempered a form of pessimism destined to become general throughout half the world. The pessimism of our day has neither tears nor moments of mystical joy. It is scientific

and æsthetic, and the consolation, if any, lies in resignation.

The pessimists of the present age are of two kinds: those who feel keenly, but are incapable of deep thought, and those who cannot help meditating, analysing, and classifying. In the domain of literature, writers of nervous energy, whose feelings are poignantly alive to the facts and the force of physical law, but who lack the faculty of insight, pass, by universal agreement, into the second rank. A kind of clairvoyance is a characteristic of the greatest. And so, of the many prophets and seers mentioned in the Old Testament, there were but four really great, two of them supreme. They were all pessimists. The Babylonian captivity and the terrible destruction of Jerusalem were predicted by Jeremiah, who lamented the most because he could see the farthest. We owe to Isaiah that book in which sorrow and indignation unite in forming the highest kind of literary style, and an immortality

that will extend to the limits of recorded history.

It was a sense of mystery and mourning which gave immortality to the work of the tragic cycle begun by Æschylus and ended by Euripides—who was another seer. A sense of the nothingness of life gave beauty and sublimity to the letters of Seneca and the meditations of Marcus Aurelius; it was the Cross, the symbol of earthly suffering, which inspired the early Christians and made them willing martyrs. The great men of antiquity indulged in no persiflage. In Goethe's principal work it is Mephistopheles who laughs. The rest suffer. Insouciant pleasures and cynical wit are among the signs which precede the downfall of long-established systems and matured nations; and hot-headed pleasure and pessimistic prophecy are the two poles that meet like an electric current in the body politic just before disaster. Of the two currents that flow from the battery of life, pessimism

is positive, pleasure negative. While Voltaire and Rousseau saw the end of old systems in France, the people sought distraction in frivolous pleasures and puerile pursuits; and the Roman stoics were preparing for the worst while the populace indulged in bloody scenes in the Imperial Arena.

Optimism, indeed, never produced a prophet. Because of all earthly things optimism is the most undiscerning. Optimists imagine themselves secure. This is why the action of optimism never extends beyond a certain limit, the line of which becomes visibly marked just before the realisation of desire. Optimism teaches that the human family will be more contented to-morrow. Just as well might we expect the British climate to change for the better as to expect human existence to become more contented. For when we put man above the actual and the scientific we contradict the very figures of chemistry, biology, and mathematics.

Previous to Schopenhauer the realm of Philosophy was a land of dreams and speculation to all but a few who preferred to walk as much as possible on the solid earth. The greater body of philosophers were men who sat quietly at home philosophising on things they had never seen, emotions they had never felt, and miseries they had never endured. Men like Hegel, Fichte, and Schelling were incompetent as much from lack of experience as from lack of clear vision; and until Goethe united poetic feeling with science and experience, science and common sense were the two things most alien to modern thought. For Bacon did not go deeply into anything beyond appearance and effect. He put into words what every educated mind could instantly grasp. His was the worldly wisdom of the ages moulded in a form at once acceptable and satisfying; but it was not new. This is why Bacon was recognised from the very first as an intellectual power.

Had he revealed new truths he would have had a long battle with ignorance and error. Schopenhauer's point of view was made possible by the scientific attitude of Spinoza and the contemporaneous example of Goethe. Schopenhauer rent the veil of illusion, brought philosophy down from the clouds, made guess-work ridiculous, and speculation absurd. Philosophy, in his day, was like a menagerie of beasts and birds, both vicious and harmless, among which it was scarcely possible to move without inconvenience or danger; but he entered this menagerie, and for thirty years defied its occupants to do their worst. They remained silent; for they had no answer. They were uncertain and negative, and dared not face the inexorable. For the so-called thinkers of his day were themselves wavering between doubt and belief.

There are, indeed, but two ways of treating the world—by the imperative or by the conciliatory. The first is absolute, the

second vacillating. Bonaparte and Bismarck were absolutists, in their own way, and so were all the greatest thinkers down to the present. Calvin and Luther in religion, Spinoza and Schopenhauer in philosophy—these names are typical manifestations of the personal and the absolute. Competent thinkers have always treated social fashion and worldly favour as if such things did not exist. Bacon looked down at the world from a height, Pascal never gave it a thought, Goethe made fun of it, Schopenhauer dissected it without the aid of anæsthetics, Frederick Nietzsche without pity. As for the conciliatory manner, there are millionaires who live in constant fear lest the world will think them as rich as they are, statesmen who never pass a law without offering a humble excuse, bishops who would rule by persuasion, philosophers who equivocate while they profess to teach. But the egoism which is reprehensible in the diplomat and the millionaire is essential

to all thinkers with a new law evoked from personal knowledge. A writer who is absolute in his own sphere of experience and intuition will no more think of tempering his speech with smiles, or his writings with suave apology, than a general would think of asking a traitor's pardon before having him executed.

If in Goethe we find for the first time a union of science and poetic sentiment, in Schopenhauer we have for the first time a scientific mind showing the futility of passing illusions and philosophical superstitions. Goethe still gives us some of the glamour of the sentimental and the metaphysical. In Schopenhauer we have all this, but in a suppressed form. He feels the power of old errors, but he knows the difference between appearance and reality, between atavic sentiment and physical law.

When Schopenhauer began to travel he came face to face with the actual. Everywhere he was impressed with the same thing

—the vanity of illusions. But while some thinkers gain this experience slowly, others pass into it suddenly. Solomon declared that everything was vanity when he had attained all the wisdom, riches, honour, and pleasure that life could bestow. The process was gradual. After the French defeat at Sedan, Ernest Renan put away optimism like a worn and useless garment. The dreamer awoke with the blow. Such are the moments when the leaden fact strikes like a plummet that touches the bottom of experience; the contact comes with a dull thud, and vanity itself disappears in the depths of consciousness.

Potent as intuition is in the world of philosophy and art, experience acts with just as much power at certain epochs and seasons in the development of human life. Of all the sensations which dispel illusion, none is more sudden and arresting than that which comes with the bestowal of a symbol of worldly power. A man never feels himself

so little, so helpless, as when he receives a so-called honour at the hands of any man or body of men. If great wealth makes a man actually feel the limits of his power, the bestowal of a title makes him suddenly feel his weakness. Only then does he realise his inability to go further. He is in the position of a bird with clipped wings. He can soar no more, he has completed his circle; he sits down and ponders over the folly of ambition and the futility of all worldly schemes. Every writer who becomes a member of an academy, or of the titled aristocracy, makes a public confession of weakness. When Tennyson received a barony he became a negative pessimist. For the first time life appeared little. For the first time he stood in the presence of the actual. The office of poet laureate was already a device to reduce the poetic afflatus to a condition of national mediocrity, but the poet could still know some moments of personal freedom and the illusions of a far-off something, a vague hope,

a mysterious destiny, a desire above and beyond the vain pomp of frivolous and childish minds. But with the rank of nobleman expectation was at an end. The curtain came down on the shifting scenes in the panorama of progress, the arena of action was darkened, and the light had gone from illusion.

Solomon was the first poet-pessimist of real power, originality, and distinction. As the tribulations of the Hebrew race had no end, and as trouble followed the Jews everywhere, they became more and more instinctively pessimistic. Spinoza brought Judaic pessimism down to the threshold of modern science. The fact needs emphasis: the Jews, owing to an innate principle of applied pessimism, have triumphed always and everywhere, and in the face of universal and concentrated enmity. The Jews have had a portion in every modern kingdom; and the ancient prophecy has been fulfilled. Indeed, their part has been the best part. They alone

have accepted the world as it is; for Greek thought was metaphysical and speculative; Roman authority meant futurition. While other peoples speculate about the modes and conditions of a future life, the Jewish mind concerns itself with the needs of the day, the comforts of the moment, the exact thing to be done, the conservation of energy by patience and methodical perseverance. The Jewish mind is concrete. It is never weakened by outward influences which do not actually concern it. The Jew has shown Christians the futility of the sentimental, and philosophers the absurdity of the speculative. Forced to execute an appalling circuit in the race after Mammon, his arrival at last coincides with destiny and confirms disaster.

The Buddhist has his moments of ecstasy, the Mohammedan his moods, the Christian his enthusiasm, but the Jew is inflexible. He is the adamant upon which the pillars of our commercial world are fixed, the sole

entity which neither recedes nor shrinks. He brings others to his adamantine base, and makes them sit or stand, at last, like Patience on a monument smiling at Grief.

Such is the force of the pessimistic instinct when applied to the practical affairs of the world. Men are made potent and persevering from fear of the future, and never from an absolute confidence in it.

Pessimism is engendered by the instability of things physical and moral, by long years of poverty, by philosophical and political disillusionment. Previous to 1789 it was the misery of the people united with the scepticism of the thinkers—that is to say, a double cause, material and spiritual—which created a pessimistic element in France. After 1793 it was continual wars, then again revolutions, right up to the catastrophe of Sedan. In Germany the people suffered the invasions of Bonaparte, several revolutions, then, in our day, a whole series of wars; but during this time the English marched

their soldiers off to India, to the antipodes, to continental Europe, everywhere out of England, sniffing at the good things, harvesting the wheat of foreign fields, bringing home fruits cultivated by others who had not the time to gather them, mixing in everything, marching at the head of native troops in foreign countries, playing with fire but never burning their fingers, riding the seas, like the *Flying Dutchman*, yet always finding a good port at the decisive movement.

In our day, an optimist may be likened to a man who resides in a fool's paradise from which there is no means of exit ; a pessimist, one who prepares for the exigencies of the future by every means devisable by the ingenuity of human imagination.

OMAR AND IMMORTALITY

OMAR AND IMMORTALITY

NEVER in the history of recorded consciousness has the effect of Death appeared to the minds of thinking people with so much force as at present. The Christian professes to regard death without fear, the Spiritist professes to regard it without concern, while the philosopher affects to regard it with stoical indifference. All join in the single desire to clothe it with a mask of illusion—poetic, religious, artistic, or philosophical; but little by little the different forms of illusion have been gradually vanishing, much as tinsel wears off and drops from the borders of a worn garment. The grinding-stone of science has sharpened doubt and put a keen edge on that pessimism which was formerly the biblical embodiment of future hope, but is now a general and permanent condition

of the educated mind. The subdued and disciplined horror of the world's mental condition to-day is not considered proper for conversation; for motives of shame or fear, or both, men try to hide the hideous truth. But music and poetry deal with the secret and sacred feelings of the heart in their own magic way—they speak of the inadmissible in a conciliating manner, of the indefinable in a tone of satisfying wonder and mystery, and of the inevitable in a tone of consolation and sympathy. Once in a long while a poet arises who treats of the inadmissible and the inevitable. Once in an age a singer arises with a voice attuned to the sorrows and the burdens of those who work in patience and wait in doubt; delicately, softly, as a butterfly alighting on a flower, he expresses the feelings and sensations of the modern disillusioned mind.

Death was not feared until a belief in eternal punishment became general. With the introduction of Christianity tears of

compassion for the departed were mingled with a sentiment of doubt in the present and dread of the future. The whole Christian world was moved and affected by the sentimental; but Fear, like a phantom, walked before Pity, and the two were never separated until Montaigne appeared with his paradox of sentimental belief and agnostic uncertainty. Fear and Sentiment were now to be found less and less in each other's company; it was the dawn of modern philosophy: but the light of positive science was not yet visible. That rose over the horizon with Darwin, and Christendom was stunned with the searchlight of fact. The blow broke the back of fear. The feelings of society changed, and the fear of death gave place to sentimental pessimism. The mind was now left to ponder over the dry facts of science, but the heart was bleeding. Reason accepted the judgment, but sentiment revolted, and the mind clutched in despair at every straw floating by on the

stream of destiny. Society laid hold of everything the eye could see and the hands touch—Spiritism and Buddhism were devised, like rafts from the débris of a floating wreck. Faith had disappeared, and doubt and despair were causing a sort of spiritual delirium; but science, inexorable, cold as the waters of a tidal wave, once more swept the ocean of belief. Mere sentimental conviction vanished in the universal upheaval. What place had the human heart in this old world of vanished dreams, in this new world of scientific fact? Where was sentiment to lodge? On what rock were pity and yearning to take refuge? Renunciation was no longer found desirable in a world where the real and the practical were daily concomitants of work and warfare. Renunciation is for the vanquished, for men who have ceased to work, who have no desire to live. A new condition of life was created, a condition of conflicting thought and emotion; but where was the cultured mind to look for support?

Browning is too vague and lofty, Whitman too jubilant and expectant, Tennyson too exclusive and credulous. The modern thinker demanded the poetry of sentiment and common sense, fact and feeling. Whitman would have filled the gap but for his extreme optimism, while Tennyson shut out the world by refusing to live with it. While one was looking too far into the future, another was polishing his lines to fit the courtly needs of the hour, while a third revelled in a sphere of philosophical conceits, from which people might evolve any belief or system most convenient. Something was demanded which should go beyond mere power, eloquence, and poetic suggestion. There is an optimism which soars above human necessity and which leaves the heart untouched. Serious readers were waiting for the sound of an instrument that should express the simplest emotions and the most poignant sentiments in a key attuned to the needs of the age. That instrument was

Omar, and the key was Resignation. Submission to the inevitable, with the heart conscious of its sentimental atavism, and the affections more than ever alive to the meanings and menaces of modern science—this is Resignation as we know it to-day. For instead of the world being in the "narthex of penitence," as Amiel says, it is in the narthex of sentimental submission. But in attaining this state poetic support was necessary. Sentiment and sensibility could not sustain the shock without the aid of a sympathiser who, by a process of poetic intuition, knew the secrets of Nature as well as human nature. When rhyme and polished verse became fashionable it was at the cost of simplicity and sincerity. Poetic emotion was weakened by having to pass through an artificial mould with which sentiment and feeling have in reality nothing to do. No orator could influence a crowd of people by speaking in rhyme. With Shakespeare, Milton, and Shelley rhythm was born with

the idea; impressions, sentiments, emotions were conceived and embodied in the "rhythmic sense." With a few exceptions, since Shelly poetic inspiration has been weakened by a search for rhyme, an idea more ingenious and subtle than spontaneous and unaffected. Poetry was getting farther and farther away from the actual needs of mind and heart; for rhyme, in the hands of Tennyson, was pathetic and mellifluous; in the hands of Swinburne it meant passion and vehemence. The first pacified, but did not convince; the second stimulated, but did not console. Because spiritual impressions, like poetic inspirations, may be conceived with art but never with artifice. The more refined our methods became the more did poetry partake of the superficial in sentiment and the artificial in art. Omar arrived, and with him a return of the genetical manner. The Persian tent-maker brought us a statement of fact, in a form untrammelled by fashionable conventions, free

from artifice or affectation, wherein is nothing morbid or morose. His moods are exigent and artless, for necessity causes the mind to forget skill. Simplicity makes art a part of Nature; sympathy makes it consoling; worldly knowledge makes it permanent. Omar has neither conceits nor illusions. Yet he has sighs for the sorrows of the world and the inevitable destiny of the human kind. He had seen what was to be. He had the clairvoyance of those who live with Nature, and, by an unscrutable, mystical law, he wrote for an epoch when science was at last to coalesce with the pantheistic idea of the Greeks. If one more example were needed of the scientific faculty of the poetic temperament we have it here. Modern as Shakespeare seems in his allusions to death and the hereafter, Omar appeals still more intimately to the peculiar necessities of the hour. He alludes to death in the dulcet voice of poetic suggestion. Poe, in *The Conquering Worm*, and some other pages,

speaks of the fate of mankind with merciless realism, but the Persian poet is always gentle as well as strong, while in his meekness there is nothing humiliating. A philosophical and poetic resignation, which is never marred by an affectation of mental suffering, is his chief characteristic. He lifts the veil of illusion, he lays bare the futility of man's conceits, the vanity of sentimental ideals, the absurdity of earthly ambitions, the littleness of man's life, the nothingness of everything sentient. In his time he announced, not the effort of modern science, but its effect. This preconception of Destiny did not originate with a metaphysical Greek, nor a learned Italian, but a humble Persian, ignorant of academical systems and schools of philosophical culture. Philosophy with Francis Bacon has not accomplished so much, nor has science with Goethe, nor pessimism with Schopenhauer, nor the latest sociology with Nietzsche.

Omar gives us the thought and the feeling without the consciousness of artistic effort,

and he prepares the educated mind for the scientific ordeal by a soothing process; he prepares the lethal chamber by ethers of perfume and nepenthe. We sail with him along the borders of a Styx where the poppy and the pomegranate grow together in a country dotted with the laurel and the cypress, symbols of glory and of grief. The great prophets were characterised by indignation and melancholy; Omar is characterised by pity and resignation. In the sanctuary of the world's heart there is an altar where the flame of pity shimmers eternally; a lamp is held before the feet of the multitudes that pass from the shore of Time into the Everlasting.

EMERSON AND UNITARIANISM

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UNITARIANISM has in its composition some of the elements of Episcopalianism with much of New England Puritanism. It would be impossible to name another system of religion with so much intellect and so little heart. The difference between the virtues of Unitarianism and the vitality of Catholicism is the difference between intellect and ardour. The generosity which springs from the intellect is always more or less conventional. Acts are weighed, deeds are balanced, one against the other, emotions are held in check, something formal is placed against the out-pourings of the affections. There is nothing that so belittles a thinker as to say: "He is all intellect." A man who is all intellect must in the nature of things take a wrong view of life. New England

poets and thinkers have all received rude knocks from the stumbling-block of intellectuality. There was developed in them—partly from climatic conditions, partly from hereditary influence—much nerve and bone, but little blood. James Russell Lowell and Oliver Wendell Holmes were the most robust and genial; but in spite of their unconventional sayings they were still in the trammels of conventional thought. Unitarianism has had considerable local influence, but it can never become a widely active force. The vital necessity everywhere lies in the heart and not in the head. The phenomenal success of General Booth's army proves once more how superior living forces are to the conventions of the intellect. For the leading trait of the Salvation Army is the social trait, from which spring all those natural and needful impulses: comradeship, love, friendship, and the like.

Unitarianism is sophisticated Puritanism. The Puritans lived above the body, the

Unitarians live above the heart. Emerson showed his limitations not by what he said, but by what he left unsaid. Freethinker as Emerson was, he never succeeded in freeing himself from certain Northern prejudices. The Bostonian intellect came at last to resemble a hot-house where all the fruits and flowers are cultivated save those from the South. As the climate lacks sunshine, the intellect lacks warmth. To appreciate Emerson properly is to define the real spirit of Unitarianism. He requires to be studied and accepted on a plane which is several degrees above the human or universal plane. The explanation of Emerson's optimism lies in his intellectual aloofness, his mental indifference to things beneath the plane on which he lived. The great thinker was not well acquainted with the world and the people in it. He saw people and things as through a telescope, but he never walked in the "valley of the shadow." Real life he did not know, and he was too

honest to deal with what was foreign to his nature.

The Sage of Concord was incapable of falling in love as a Goethe or a Schopenhauer would fall in love. His was the intellectual kind that lies above impulse and passion. For this reason he makes friendship superior to love in his *Essays*. And he was probably right in so far as friendship gives more unalloyed and prolonged satisfaction; but had Emerson been able to write a book like the *Sorrows of Werther*, that extra power would have given him that extra touch which was needed to make him the greatest essayist the world has known. His essays are like a plot of ground sown with lilies and other white flowers, but without perfume. A few of Omar's perennial roses, and a little of his wine, would have given colour and fragrance to the garden and some passion to his prose.

When Carlyle took Emerson through the slums of London to prove that society was

rotten to the core, Emerson, by his answer that all these poor people were simply fulfilling their mission in this world, and that everything was going on as it should, proved himself an optimistic dreamer. Carlyle, in spite of his dyspepsia and his chronic melancholy, was on the positive side, the side of action; Emerson was on the negative side, the side of theory. Carlyle was moved by a Celtic passion, which was the keynote of his power and his influence. If the Optimists show strength, patience, and an unruffled demeanour, *les grands mélancoliques*, as Scherer calls them, have force, fervour, and emotional passion to give them universal influence. Carlyle's work stands as a warning and a prophecy. Emerson is a mixture of vague transcendentalism and shrewd common sense. He passes beyond the practical and the peremptory into the region of the super-ethical. While Carlyle speaks to the heart and conscience, Emerson appeals to the mind and the intellect; and while

intellectual power may fascinate, of itself it never satisfies, being a kind of radiance which gives no warmth. Carlyle speaks from the soul, from man to man; and as the soul is ever a greater magnet than the mind, his power in the world will ever exceed that of Emerson. The Sage of Concord appealed more to a group of minds, limited to certain physical and metaphysical conditions, such as the Unitarian element in American thought.

THEATRICAL AUDIENCES

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NO true lover of the playhouse ever ignores the size, the quality, and the condition of the audience. To understand the audience you must bear in mind the significance of the season and the function of the day. Indeed, the most interesting thing connected with a theatre is the people who witness the plays ; for a theatre is a veritable battle-field of conflicting emotions, opinions, and sentiments. The playwright who knows his business attacks the public by the antithesis of tears and laughter; by surprises, feints, and make-believes, by flank movements and witty assaults, by forced situations, as well as by natural ones. On this battle-field tears mean conditional surrender, but in unrestrained laughter the audience surrenders unconditionally.

Theatrical Audiences

An author concocts a play, and an actor conceives a rôle. A plan is imagined, developed, and carried out, but the onlookers sit and lay no plans; they listen and appropriate. It is their function to sympathise or remain neutral, to receive a shock from the human battery on the stage at a given moment, or to remain passive when the shock is supposed to occur. Everything in a theatre is illusive, except the audience.

The test of a play, as literature, lies in the reading of it; the test of an audience lies in its behaviour. The difference between the play and the listeners lies in this: the first is a patchwork of imaginary plot and passion; the second is composed of a thousand living, personal entities, whose laughter means real fun and whose tears mean real emotion. But the plot—which is the movement—means the tricks and devices of stage-craft; the plot requires the actor, the soul of the play means study and meditation. When Hamlet declaims the soliloquy he talks pure

literature and not drama; but when the actor pours poison into the King's ear he is playing an illusive trick on the people in the stalls. The soliloquy is just as great when read in your own sitting-room. This is why the secret of the play's worth lies in its suggestive power. All else is superficial and incidental. For the most part audiences behave as if the dramatic tricks were the realities, and the literature of a play its stuffing—as if the nourishment were not in the meat but in the onions and the bread-crumbs.

Much depends on the size of the auditorium and the quality of the play, but as a rule the brains of an audience are in the stalls, the stomach in the pit, and the heart in the gallery. The balcony is the most neutral part of the house; the inexperienced and the respectable provincial sit here by preference. The playhouse is a social crucible where people mingle without being mixed. Smiles and laughter are here the

signs and the sounds by which the student of human nature may perceive the social grades that exist between the stalls, the dress-circle, the balcony, and the gallery. Below sit the society sphinxes, who stare at the stage in vapid serenity, but never laugh —it is their province. The laughter upstairs is always somewhat hoarse and horsy. The hilarity is often accompanied by wheezy coughing, aggravated by hysterical contagion and bad air. Mirth amongst the people is torrential. Indeed, a theatre is a cauldron of emotional witch-broth; the things that are done pertain to magic. The old actors appear youthful, the callous sentimental, the stupid witty, the plain beautiful, and the commonplace romantic. It is the world of illusion, where an art or a scene may reflect a magic ray of reality in a sphere as vast as imagination and as potent as life and love, but to the actors themselves there is no mystery. It is the playgoer who has entered the region of artifice, the realm of light and

shade, the abode of fancy and fascination, where enigma, mystery, and emotion are one, and where the problems of life revolve in a kaleidoscopic world of romance and realism. A theatre is a hot-bed of paradox.

As the theatrical world has its seasons and days, so there are special theatres for special classes. A playhouse is like a human entity; every theatre has its soul; each has its own form, colour, and influence. Theatrical superstition springs from an ignorance of the psychological laws which rule here as elsewhere. It is not then merely in the physical formation of a theatre that the secret lies, but in its personal social attraction. Attraction or repulsion, all depends upon a unity of material and mystical law. The material depends upon the structural form, the mystical on a combination of subtle moods and influences too illusive to be grasped by any save those who feel them without being able to explain them. So subtle are the influences which govern here that certain theatres may

be likened to the planets: they have their seasons of ascendency. They rise above the social horizon, increase in brightness, then grow dim, and sink just beneath the realm of royalty and fashion, perhaps to rise again into brilliance and favour after a long period of obscurity.

There are three kinds of audiences which symbolise contemporary social states and influences. Mr Pinero presents the everyday fact in a polished frame, with a gold leaf of sentiment well laid on in the proper places; Ibsen gives the realities condensed, he presents them without gilt and without glamour; Maeterlinck presents a picture with a rugged frame, in which is seen the romance of reality. Mr Pinero's romance is instantly assimilated by the audience; Ibsen's realities offend the sentimental and the romantic; while Maeterlinck's audience forms two distinct parts—the one sentimental, the other poetic. It is not difficult to sum up the constitution of a Pinero

audience, and an Ibsen house may be judged after a half-hour's scrutiny; but a Maeterlinck audience is never quite what it seems. The listeners form a complex and contradictory mass. On these occasions the gallery presents the most interesting study. There are no oranges, apples, and nuts here now, no horsy laughter, no passing of stale beer. The place has been metamorphosed into the precincts of a temple whose god is being worshipped in an unknown tongue; for most of the ladies have the cachet of refinement, but they have left their critical faculties at home. These refined faces, with spectacled eyes, peer at the stage-pictures and are impressed by something they cannot define. They are moved by something they cannot critically explain; for they are witnessing a play the words of which are like a foreign language. The play has become like a *tableau vivant*; they are judging the whole thing in the light of the *mis-en-scène*, the love scenes, and the gestures. The art and the poetry of the play

they have missed. When we get to the stalls the element of paradox is still more marked. The stockbroker is here with his fashionable companion. Every one is here; there are too many people here. Every critical person is, so to speak, sitting on pins. Every one is thinking of what the others will think. The man who has read the play at home, in peace and silence, feels he has done wrong in coming, and hopes there will be no *contre-temps* during the performance. He begins to wish himself well out of the house, but the fascination of the human holds him; for, curious in the human chemistry of theatrical composition, he is here to make comparative notes. He waits, and wonders, and listens. He has a vague feeling of approaching calamity—some bungling servant will let the priceless vase fall, and the art, the form, the myrrh, and the mystery will all vanish together. Still, his real business is with the audience, and if the vase should fall his eyes will not be on the stage, but on the

audience. For the theatre itself is the touch-stone of contemporary moods and emotions, poetic aspirations, and social ambitions. The leading religious sects, all political parties, meet in the playhouse. A music-hall is a barometer for political storms ; a theatre is a thermometer for social moods.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MUSIC-HALL

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HOW vast and overpowering is the influence of the modern music-hall! What a world it represents! For the variety hall is now the pastime most dear to the hearts of the public. What the Colosseum was to Rome the music-hall is to London, but without the rugged and masculine character of the Roman institution.

Seated in a comfortable Hall, we can well imagine ourselves floating down the stream of life, without oars or rudder, compass or captain, in a sort of *Flying Dutchman* of destiny which will land us somewhere, somehow, on the golden banks of a world of bliss from whose enchanted shores—like Tennyson's Lotus Eaters—we shall return no more. Melodious languor symbolises the type. The favourites are the songs that might have been

composed in a drunken dream, to be sung in a maudlin reverie—music expressing the languid lilt of the latter-day disposition, by turns supine and cynical, sentimental and obtuse. Swayed to and fro by variety and sensation, the music-hall audience lolls in nonchalant security, heedless of the duties and the calls of the morrow; for the Hall is the paradise of the absent-minded. To a student of human nature everything here is curious, instructive, fateful. Infinitely so is the paradox of seeming refinement and callous vulgarity. Amazing is the fusion of the cynical with the sentimental. The close observer soon discovers that there is something else to be heard here besides old-fashioned humour and innocent sentiment. Sharp as a serpent's tooth is the sarcasm, corroding as the contents of a vial of vitriol is the satire which follows the singing of "The Lost Chord," or "Queen of the Earth." A popular comedian appears and carries the people along in the groove of his trenchant sallies;

and with a kind of democratic symbolism he evolves from a tired and half-blasé people a spirit of reckless and rollicking *diablerie* which astonishes foreigners who are just being initiated in this kind of amusement. The actor is typifying an able-bodied and willing pauper, and the audience instantly appreciate the mordant wit of the words, the inimitable expression, and the attitude.

The music-hall as it exists to-day, is the natural pendant of the race-course. It is the synthesis of the customs, habits, and thought of an age of sentiment without sense, amusement without discrimination. The music-hall is the national lounge for millions of people who are tired of devising means to avoid work. For tired brains require light and attenuated stimulants. A little at a time, and often, with unceasing variety.

In vain may we search the history of nations for a parallel to the "frenzied frivolity" of the present age. For, what renders the music-hall so potent and popular

is the fact that in it the sensations of the fox and tame-deer hunt, and the blatant emotions of the race-course, are revived under new and ever varying conditions. It is sport set to maudlin music—for there is no denying the glaring fact that the London music-hall, even at its best, is plebeian. It represents the humour and the lolling licence of a sordid democracy fringed about and set off by the fashion and the glamour of the titled and the rich; and the circumstances of society leaders appearing on its boards serves but to emphasise the sordidness of its surroundings. Here the old and dying sensations are revived nightly with all the artifice and electrical "vim" that modern ingenuity can devise. Nothing is forgotten. Even tears have a regular place in each performance; a short space is set apart for the lachrymal, just as in certain tobacco shops a divan is set apart where the opium-smoker may doze and dream without let or hindrance. The smoking of bad tobacco is general, and the

drinking of stale beer *de rigueur*. Reminiscences of the old and classical days are evoked now and then, such as scenes from Dickens—just enough to permit the sexagenarian in the stalls to realise how far he has got from real sentiment, and how irreparably he is glued to the cynical present.

The penchant for imitation is one of the most marked features of the London music-hall. These imitations are attempts at dramatic and musical art. But the most distinct feature of the English music-hall is the spirit of mockery displayed in the character songs by the leading "artistes." Herein it resembles the Parisian music-hall. But the Halls of Paris are of two distinct kinds: those of Montmartre represent the weirdly decadent; those of the inner boulevards, the humorous and the sentimental. A sort of intellectual *danse macabre* is indulged in by the typical wits of Montmartre. Death is mimicked in direful attitudes, and evoked by vertiginous efforts of the imagina-

tion. In Paris the old century and the old era were accompanied to the limbo of dead things by a *ronde infernale* in which the dominant spirit was pitiless cynicism. The actors here acted their parts with the full consciousness of the meaning of every word and gesture. They knew the import of every phrase, every wink of the eye, every note of the weird accompaniment. The morbid picture was artfully designed and cunningly executed, and the general effect was one that reduced the listeners to a full realisation of the negation of all the systems, schools, and ambitions of the modern world. The cabarets of Montmartre, in the heyday of success, represented the death's head at the last banquet of the nineteenth century. Like a great spot on the sun the cabaret was there to remind France—and the whole world with her—that nothing is perfect yet, and that nations have not learnt to forget the grim realities of existence.

The spirit that moves the music-hall

actors of London is not one of wilful and cunningly devised cynicism. There is something impromptu about the words and the attitudes of the artistes. At Montmartre it requires artistic perception, penetration, and a cosmopolitan experience to appreciate what one sees and hears. In London the art is popular. It is English as well as cockney. It stands for the whole of Britain; it is representative of a whole race. The music-hall synchronises the soul of London. In the absence of a national theatre we have this institution which makes Shakespeare an impossibility without a splendid *mise-en-scène*, and which reduces a play by Mr Pinero to the minimum of success unless it contains at least one scene *à la Gay Lord Quex*. For, after all is said and done, it is not the beauty of Shakespeare's words nor the wisdom of his aphorisms that attract the people. The masses are enticed by the splendour of the scenes and the costumes. Amusement is sought, and when a young man has been to

a music-hall two or three times during the week, he selects a theatre which he thinks will afford him one evening's diversion. If *Julius Cæsar* is being played, he will see that once for the sake of the murder scene; if it be *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, he will attend once for the sake of the music; if it is *Henry the Eighth*, once for the sake of the pageantry; and so on throughout the Shakespearian répertoire. Strictly speaking, there is no Shakespeare public in London. Neither is there a Pinero public. But there is a *Gay Lord Quex* public, and there will continue to be until the tower of Westminster falls in a universal pandemonium.

The music-halls of Paris are not so nationally representative as those of London. In Paris the variety halls are frequented by a class of people who live on or near the boulevards—habitués of the cafés and the brasseries, people without fixed homes, without regular occupation. In London all classes frequent the music-hall, which

now constitutes a permanent and national mode of diversion, as much a part of the lives of the people as attending mass used to be before the Reformation. The music-hall is a law unto itself; it exists by itself and for itself; but it must not be supposed that it has a mission in any sense or degree. The people who flock to it, night after night, are people who are incapable of any serious thought during the day, who have not worked particularly hard, and who wish to be amused in the most neutral manner possible in the evening. For, in spite of appearances, the Hall is neutral—in art, in thought, in sentiment, in religion, in everything. On occasion it appears to possess character; but this is only when it is seized with the epilepsy of politics. At such times its spasms of patriotic indignation constitute a real danger to the State. Even now a good many thinking people judge the temper of the nation by the temper of the music-hall; for in this hypnotic atmosphere cool,

clear reasoning is impossible. The typical patrons of the Halls, who hail the name of the Prime Minister one evening, would, on the next, acclaim his rival with equal gusto were his rival to come into power.

Like the public-house, the music-hall is a huge and ugly growth, beyond the art of the reformer or the wit of the politician. It is the home of the "neutral" of every class and creed, the unconscious enemy of serious art, serious sentiment, and above all, of the serious drama. England will have it as long as she has the public-house; that long and no longer; but the thought that inspires sadness is the one that, by the time the public-house gives place to something better, London may have sunk to the level of a second-class caravansary for the American tourist, who will see in the helpless inhabitants of the metropolis a curious and instructive remnant of a once noble and mighty people.

THE ABBÉ JOSEPH ROUX

THE ABBÉ JOSEPH ROUX

Full well we feel, full well we know,
Great sorrows spring from little deeds,
Great happiness from some great woe ;
The truth humanity most needs
Affliction's fires can best bestow.

TALENT is the faculty of acquiring knowledge by the cultivation of certain gifts, such as singing, acting, story-telling, picture-making, and the like, which may be moulded and modelled after almost any fashion — time, patience, imitation, and memory being the principal factors in its development.

Genius may be roughly classed as of two kinds—that which is subtile and delicate, the inspiration of which is like an electric current that conducts thought to the very core of things, and that which is powerful and methodical, which often mistakes mere facility for inspiration.

Original thought and profound feeling constitute a union of the intellectual and emotional faculties which we may term personality. Without this blending of brain and nerve we have only the imitator, who mistakes the prevailing modes of psychological rhetoric for the highest and the deepest conceptions of united mental and moral attributes.

Clever repartee, some wordly experience, an apt mode of expression, sympathy, and humour, diluted to cover the susceptibilities of a large portion of humanity who judge the competent by the laws which govern their own limited capacity to know and to feel—these things, with much more of equivalent import, are what cause the master of mere words to be mistaken for the profound thinker and creative artist.

From the earliest times down to the present the individual environment has mystified the most experienced psychologists. The highest intelligence is rarely

displayed under a garb of physical attraction. Nature spreads before us an illusive show which deceives all who are not close observers of her laws. Compare the shrill cry and brilliant plumage of the parrot and the peacock with the plain colours and pleasant song of the lark and the nightingale; the brightest flowers are commonly the least fragrant, and placid waters have the profoundest depths. These examples might be multiplied without limit, humanity itself presenting the most interesting and instructive.

The poet is concealed under seeming imperfections, and is looked upon with mingled feelings of doubt and distrust, and the world stares in silent wonder when Nature's Titan walks forth clothed in the habiliments of his own creations.

To live a life of self-abnegation and solitude, in a sphere of thought and labour far beneath one's real self, and yet remain morally healthy and intellectually vigorous,

is an ordeal which only the best intellects can survive. The Abbé Joseph Roux is one of these. This humble parish priest, living a life of isolation, studied first his own heart, the sooner to arrive at a knowledge of that outer world which he had only known in history and fabled romances.

There is no science, spiritual or material, which can suddenly develop an accomplished and practical thinker. Good taste, noble aims, judgment, patience, and, above all, innate culture are necessary to temper the flow of intuitive thought which might otherwise swamp the intellect in poetic illusions of various kinds.

In the Abbé Roux's *Meditations* what strikes the reader most is their universality of idea and application. Dryden's maxim that, "Genius must be born and never can be taught," is quite *à propos* here, and although Joseph Roux received a classical education, it is safe to say that for the most part it served, not to develop, but to restrain

the natural progress of his own temperament. Talent, which imitates and adapts from models, must have these examples, but the poet-philosopher, the life-artist, born with understanding to analyse the mysteries of head and heart, who is gifted with that freedom of soul and speech which characterised the immortals of old, must be untrammelled by the formulas of critics, or fear of conventional censors. Nevertheless, the works of the Abbé Roux are sufficiently original, in spite of his rigid school training, to rank him among the great maximists of the world.

Nothing impresses us more than to read thoughts closely akin to our own secret sentiments expressed by a stranger and a foreigner in a far-off country, who lives and moves in a social and political atmosphere wholly unlike our own. We marvel at the exhibition of a gift that can make the cultured of all nations feel that they are reading the sentiments of one of their own kind in

spirit and in substance. We feel, when we read the maxims, word-pictures, and intimate thoughts of a writer like this, that we have known him long and understand him well, that we have suffered his afflictions, drunk from the same cup of bitterness, eaten the same bread of disappointment, lived his seclusion, waited like him in silence, and at last entered with him into fame.

It was Flaubert who said that, "Every work deserves condemnation in which the author can be divined"; but, as M. Mariéton says, "I prefer to think with M. Paul Bourget, that no poetical work can be necessary to another soul if it has not first been necessary to our own." Nothing is truer than that we seek the acquaintance of an author in his works, in order to discover what manner of man he is, and if we fail to discover something which we can apply directly to our life-experiences, our interest in the author cools and diminishes. As a proof of this, I may say that we all like those authors best whom

we most clearly understand, for without this understanding there can be no sympathy, and without sympathy no appreciation. The good that a writer may do us depends on the kind of influence his thoughts and opinions may have on our minds and actions, and no amount of sermonising will move us if our sympathies are not aroused toward the author. And in this regard the thoughts of the Abbé Roux have the most direct bearing on the inner lives of thousands who deem themselves intellectually and morally isolated by the force of just such peculiar circumstances and conditions as are described in these unique volumes.

Isolated from men of thought and culture, his spirit was almost broken by a rude yoke of psychological restraint. For years he was familiar with solitude and melancholy, those mighty and inexorable elements which make a hot-house of the soul, where flowers and fruits are forced without regard to time or season. Poet, priest, philosopher, some of

his pages border on paradox, while others might be misconstrued by the surface reader into negative pessimism.

We approach great and incomprehensible minds through their foibles and necessities, as we gaze at the sun through a piece of smoked glass without being dazzled; and in these aphorisms we recognise the imprint of that seal, antique and classical, which touches a common cord in the hearts of intimate humanity of whatever creed or opinion. This is the spirit which at last seeks expression in all forms of Nature, without which nothing beautiful can exist—it is autumn in the seasons, it is the minor mode in music, in the mind it is melancholy, in philosophy practical pessimism. In art and literature it gives that indescribable grace of pose and pathos so vividly depicted by the Athenians. It was the unity of poetic melancholy with physical beauty that perfected and immortalised the Greek conception of art.

I cannot make more than a passing notice here of a peculiar prejudice, not at all at variance with the moral and spiritual standard of Joseph Roux's early theological training and convictions, and although this minor fault does not affect him as a poet, it does to a limited extent taint some of his judgments as a philosopher and critic. But then the poet is greater than the philosopher, and it is to the poet that I allude principally in these remarks; and in spite of this characteristic bias, the human heart-throbs of the artist render his thoughts and emotions palpably and permanently intimate to the student of the higher forms of literature. More than this, his opinions are graced by a large-hearted charity which at once introduces us to the poet-priest acquainted with the vanities and follies of the world—a man of silence and solitude, too far removed from self-interest to fear public opinion, and too conscientious to favour it.

"The heart of man is a lyre of seven

chords; six chords for sadness, a single chord for joy which rather vibrates." This is the dominant tone of Joseph Roux's life and writings, but it is only a repetition of what all profound minds have passed through whose thought and example have been effective and durable. It must not be supposed, however, that these two volumes of *Meditations* are filled with the bitterness of disappointed genius. There are chapters given to joy and fortune, as well as to love, friendship, and friends, each subject being handled with rare deliberation and judgment.

With what gentle vigour he says: "The difference between a cultured and an uncultured man is not greater than the difference between a king and a beggar"; as if to remind the reader that his life has been sacrificed on the altar of the peasants among whom he has lived and preached so long, like an intellectual giant among pigmies. With a single stroke he tells what is only to be learned by a combined

experience of travel and human nature, and perhaps this is the only instance where so much actual wisdom has been displayed within limits at once so isolated and contracted.

Victor Hugo might have written the following: "Those who agitate much, and those who reflect much, contract an experience of men and things which makes them understand each other by the least word or sign." There is a deep analytical insight which characterises these aphorisms, unaccountable on any other hypothesis than that of intuition. But there is no such thing as inspiration superior to the creative faculty of the individual; and it must not be forgotten that Joseph Roux is before everything a man of meditation and thought, whose whole life may be likened to an Æolian harp fixed in the turret of a deserted castle, so finely strung that the faintest breeze awakens a pensive and responsive tone.

Nothing renders a man of power so self-conscious as this element of isolation. Solitude and patience are two things that give power and polish to thought. Meditation is the secret of refined and durable intelligence, without which no prophet ever preached, without which the passions and sentiments of poetry are only a passing impulsion, composed by the dilettante in a day, to be read and assimilated by the novice in an hour. The presence of meditation gives grace to solitude and courage to patience; it acts like an arbiter between the personal power and the reason, which dominate the brain, and the egoistic pleasures, which dominate the heart. Study is agitation, movement, like the juice of the grape in fermentation; but meditation is like the pure wine which sharpens the wit and gives power to the wings of genius. Meditation contemplates the past, appropriates the present, and anticipates the future.

The Abbé Roux encountered a spirit of

jealousy and envy even in his obscure parish, for he says: "The fate of a man of talent is to be pitied. His mediocre and jealous brethren cry out like the brothers of Joseph: 'How are you to become greater? Ought we to serve and submit?'" Jealous friends are more to be feared than rivals in love, for in this kind of jealousy one has to deal with a tyranny constantly manifested by a number of persons in different places.

If there is one sign of genius more positive than another it is the absolute conviction of personal originality and power—a conviction which is never weakened by public denial or individual jealousy. It is this element in genius that renders it a perpetual mystery to the multitude. This lonely man was gifted from the first with the "patience of genius" —a phrase often used, but little understood. It is the consciousness of superiority and final triumph, without which the mind would have no incentive to think, the hands no incentive

to work, the heart no solace for suffering. This personal acquaintance with one's own inherent worth is one of the most curious as well as instructive features connected with the lives of original thinkers. It lends a strange fascination to the solitude they are compelled to keep, and the communion they constantly maintain with the spontaneous harmonies of Nature is doubly consoling on this account. This reserve force was one of the attributes which caused the ancients to look upon their heroes as divine.

The Abbé Roux is interested only in reality, which means the ideal, and not in the material, which means disappointment, for he says: "When I return from the country of men, I carry back nothing but illusions and disillusions." To use the words of another French writer, "His spirit is ill, but his heart is sound." These things remind me that there is a close connection between the poet who has learned what illusion means, and the pessimist who has

little faith in the progressive goodness of humanity here below. Poet, pagan, pessimist, are three terms which strike the senses with a singular unity of design and metaphor. How difficult it is to separate them! If we judge poets by the standard which our brilliant maximist sets up, there will not be many left who can clear the barriers of paganism, and when we admit this, there is nothing left but to admit pessimism in some form. It is impossible to deal with poetry in its broadest sense without at least appearing to follow the style and thought of pantheism, and the more one is given to solitude and meditation the more susceptible does the mind become to its influence. The beautiful sentiment of Schopenhauer that, "Musicians speak the highest wisdom in a language which they do not understand," may be reversed somewhat and applied to the pessimistic poets of France of all degrees of merit and all stages in history. Many of them, in spite of certain theological pre-

judices, have spoken and sung in accents far above their evident convictions, while, on the other hand, the thinkers, like Joseph Roux, who hold with great tenacity to dogmatic forms, often pass below their own level of spiritual faith and appear what they are not. Like Montaigne he sees, feels, and meditates in one mood, and reasons in another. In reading these powerful productions it is sometimes necessary to separate the man of feeling from the man of reason. Here and there a line should be drawn between the moralist and the artist, and a distinction made between the poet and the priest. He is not all things to all minds, but he is susceptible to degrees and qualifications of physical moods and mental conditions, which are indeed the true birthright of all creative intellects; and were he not a theologian we might expect him to show a wit as keen as Voltaire, a sarcasm as penetrating as La Rochefoucauld, and a bitterness as hopeless as Pascal. As it is, he reminds

one of all three, although so distinctly applicable to the present condition of philosophy and society.

Joseph Roux presents in a striking manner the three virtues which Goethe declared all should possess: Reverence for what is above us, for all that is beneath us, and for all our equals. It is not the individual he attacks, but the system; not the person, but the practice. He condemns what he believes to be false teaching, not by abusing the writers whose seeming errors he hates, but by a single blow, directed with great critical acumen and rhetorical precision at the most vital and vulnerable part of their works.

The Abbé Roux's portraits of Limousin peasants are like antithetical bas-reliefs hewn from the native rocks of primitive humanity, whose figures and faces are lit with the pale humour of a sordid necessity, and whose rugged character glimmers with a rude poetry midway between superstition and religion.

These pages on the peasants of the country parish are unlike anything in modern prose. With what mystery and charm he dashes into the bleak night, depicting at each step the lonely hut of the village sorceress, her looks, her speech, her apparel, who, lamp in hand, goes out into the darkness not so much on a mission of mercy as of magic. With what bewitching touches he carries us over moor and meadow, through field and forest, to the dwelling of the sick child where a room full of soil-tillers are awaiting the effect of the spell which the witch-doctor has just intoned over the cradle. He creates a chromatic meaning in the minds of his readers by these images, brought forth from the depths of ignorance and misery, which make one think of Rembrandt.

There are intellectual pugilists who, in argument, knock one down more by the force of will than by superior knowledge, but the poet of Limousin is not one of these. The seal of meditation and wisdom is affixed to

every expression of his thoughts, and every paragraph bears the stamp of that patience which has been his sustenance, that faith which has been his companion, that inspiration which has been his guide.

PORTRAITS AND IMPRESSIONS

DAVID HUME, in his essay entitled "A Standard of Taste," says: "Among a thousand different opinions that men may have on the same subject, there is but one just and true, and the only difficulty is to ascertain and fix it."

I have occasion to ponder over this axiom in a room where I cannot look up from my writing-desk, without fixing my attention on some poet, artist, musician, or philosopher. I find that these portraits not only teach valuable lessons in art and literature, but also give a knowledge of the intimate tastes and inclinations of one's friends which, I believe, nothing else could afford.

The more I gaze at these portraits and busts, the more interested I become in the talent and the genius they represent. What

romance and illusion, stoical patience, virtue and vanity issue from this ensemble. It seems at times, in the glimmering of lamplight, as if the immortal procession only speaks of mythological fables, too idealistic to be real. The pictures are arranged according to harmony of form, colour, and size, so that tragedians, clergymen, and comedians often fall together—a fortunate circumstance, as it compels me to go beyond the beaten track of individual parallels in comparing human nature; and conventionality—that bane of art—has been avoided, by which I might have huddled all the musicians into a corner by themselves, or placed the novelists together in a circle, until the very walls would have groaned with all the evil and envious things they ever said of one another.

The majority of my visitors are attracted by the elegance and simplicity displayed in a portrait of Madame Récamier, while the portrait of Rachel beside it is scarcely noticed.

"Grace in women," says Hazlitt, "gains the affections sooner and secures them longer than anything else." But it seems to me that Hazlitt here means mere physical beauty, of the kind which captivates the larger portion of humanity, as I have just mentioned. If this be so he is right, for beauty of this kind is an illusion, which fascinates the ordinary mind longer than anything else; but it will not satisfy thoughtful people. In Rachel this grace is half hidden by an air of repose and severity unintelligible to the casual observer. Adrienne Lecouvreur is typical of emotion, Mademoiselle Mars of enthusiasm, Siddons of dignity, but Rachael is all this and more; and one has only to compare this head with that of Madame Bernhardt to note the difference between the classical and the sensational in dramatic art. Rachel was Grecian, while Madame Bernhardt is Parisian, and in her most characteristic scenes shows a power that combines vehemence with impulsiveness,

wherein she gains in objective realism while she loses in subjective harmony.

When Rachel first appeared romanticism was at its height. It had not yet given place to sensationalism in the drama. The Parisians went to the theatre not only to be amused but to learn. The Théâtre Français was the rendezvous for the bourgeois and the noble, the artist and the poet. Mothers accompanied their daughters to witness the productions of the great French dramatists, not only to receive lessons in deportment and dress, but to receive a moral and intellectual stimulant as well. The House of Molière was regarded as a temple of the Muses. The trials and triumphs of mythical heroes were here depicted with historical authority and classical art, and the mind was never distracted from the uniformity of the ensemble by clever stage management and artful monologues intended to rivet the attention on a single actor or actress. In

those days several dramatic stars were visible on the stage at once; and while the genius of Rachel rose above everything else, it did not detract from the merits of the other artists. Her acting lent a brilliancy to their efforts, because she possessed the secret of becoming one with the character she was personating, which, in turn, inspired her comrades with enthusiasm. Madame Bernhardt, on the contrary, aided by Sardou and D'Annunzio, has evolved a new manifestation of dramatic art whereby the interest in the monologue is maintained by cunning manœuvres and magnificent *mise-en-scène*. The moment Rachael spoke she addressed the characters of the play and not the audience. Her facial expression, her movements, her postures, had the impress of one who did not pose before the public but who acted her part wholly absorbed in the personality of the rôle. As *Cléopâtre* Madame Bernhardt places the actress on exhibition, to the detriment of the highest interests of dramatic

unity. Her acting is a brilliant illustration of the spirit of the times and the tendency to become, day by day, more egoistical and less impersonal, more vehement and less suggestive, more passionate and less impressive.

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An air of languour and heaviness is often a paradoxical sign of the highest talent. While the mind is absent in a land of poetic creations the face wears an expression of inanity. The spirit seems, for the moment, to wander in regions where the emotions offer the strongest attraction—it trembles in doubt with Pascal, swoons in pity with Dante, triumphs with the heroes of Shakespeare, while the features remain immovable throughout all. The portrait of Beethoven has the abstraction of one obsessed; Buffon looks heavy, sleepy; Pascal fatigued and feeble. These are some of the characteristics that distinguish genius from mere wit, talent, and scholarship. On the other hand, wit wears the smile on the lip and the sar-

castic expression of the eye which distinguish the typical Rivarol from the typical Pascal. It is this spirit of *bonhomie* that limits the *beaux esprits* to local influence and transitory fame. Let their success in the beginning be ever so great, without the charm of imagination, without the flavour of poetry, without a union of reason and sentiment, their names soon cease to be remembered. Out of ten great men and women we find nine wearing an expression of habitual reserve, abstraction, and melancholy.

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Every age produces men who are in exact harmony with the needs of the hour. Voltaire, the mephistophelian mind of the eighteenth century, lived and acted in accordance with the laws which govern the *raison d'être* of the inscrutable mysteries of human nature. There never was a more perfect type of this kind. With a physiognomy that suggests the courage of the eagle and the cunning of the fox, every line of the

face may be paralleled with some form of humorous fancy, some phase of polished thought, some personal peculiarity, that makes one think of elements and motives, but not of individuals. His penetrating eye, pragmatic nose, and protruding chin are an index of the intellectual and sarcastic vigour that ruled the foremost nation of his time. Equanimity worthy of a saint added methodical harmony to a cynical face and a philosophical mind which turned his seeming trivial disposition into the most practical and serious results. His temper was balanced by a mental tranquillity which was seldom jeopardised by fits of passion. Nature had equipped him with the accoutrements of mother-wit and worldly wisdom. This impregnable coat of mail was richly garnished with golden fringes of poetic fancy, and the whole, tinged with courtly intrigue, gave zest to his followers while it terrified his opponents. His sarcasm withered without giving time for decay. His pen was mightier than

any sword, for it did not make corpses of his enemies, but turned them into yawning mummies whose sole insignia of modern existence lay in the inimitable Voltarian art with which they were embalmed.

Modern history does not furnish a more remarkable example of literary and political discretion. Never for a moment did he lay himself open to ridicule. He was one of the few satirists whose sorties on the corrupt legions of society left no weak spots in the ramparts of his reason. His business was not with the bullet and the battle-axe, but with the conscience. It is generally a feeble mind, backed by the instincts of the bull-dog, that expresses its predilections in war-like exploits; and sarcasm has a mission of mercy to perform among a stupid and degenerate people by constraining them to mend their ways and avert the horrors of social anarchy. Thus it was that Goethe ignored the wars of his time, taking no part or interest in them, while the petty kings and

politicians censured him for not descending from the throne of genius to dabble in the miserable squabbling of rival factions and personal intrigue.

Compare the efforts and events in Voltaire's life with those in the life of Bonaparte! What a picture of wit and judgment *versus* power and glory! Voltaire, starting out amid divers vicissitudes, held his own in spite of social preferment and political plotting, gradually mounting the ladder of fame, learning new lessons here, winning new laurels there, until his position in the eyes of the thinking world was impregnable, living so long that he saw his enemies pass away one by one, leaving him sitting upon an intellectual throne—to the last a very king of tact, humour, and vivacity.

Behold Bonaparte, the political parvenu, rising from obscure regions, a mighty spirit of impulse and ambition, subduing men by sheer will, without the gift of foreseeing and preventing reactions. He possessed ability

without discretion, tact without judgment. He moved men by a mental stimulus generated by personal magnetism. But it was not the force caused by the wit and common sense of Voltaire—it was the kind that begets more fear than reverence, and more wonder than applause.

Many of Bonaparte's victories were followed by a psychological and material reaction; but Voltaire was never disturbed by disputes nor frustrated by quarrelling factions. He sat quietly in his chair, using his pen to perform what warriors and statesmen could not bring about by perfidious experiments with the patience and the purses of a long-suffering nation.

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There is a strong resemblance between the portraits of Poe and Paganini. There is a contempt for routine, an intense individuality in these two faces which seems to say, "I am in harmony with my art, at war with the world."

Paganini possessed that special faculty of emotional improvisation which fascinates the public. This is what a certain kind of music will do, and it cannot be accomplished by poetry. The performances of the great violinist both surprised and charmed, thus adding two potent factors to the simple one of art. Poe appealed to the emotions through the intellect. He demanded the highest culture in his readers, and that element was small in America in his day.

It is an error to suppose that an appreciation of brilliant music is a sign of culture. Sentiment, like emotion, is ever ready to laugh or shed tears over a form of art which may have its origin in passionate impulse and sensuous delights. To be a great poet requires much more than imitation, passion, and imagination—it requires a philosophical intuition, a musical art which lies beyond that of mere tonic melody; and it is this which makes a writer like Poe an enigma to his contemporaries.

There is something about brilliant music which acts on the senses like the fragrance of flowers and the *éclat* of colours; ninety intelligent men out of a hundred know its value and meaning; but with the highest poetry a correct judgment is much more difficult and rare. The brilliant musician need not use reason. Paganini's art was like that of the orator—it contained an element of emotional hysteria that turned sentiment into tears.

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Chopin was the poet, and Liszt the mechanician among the pianists. The famous Hungarian was the master of technical difficulties, Chopin of inspiration. Unceasing labour developed Liszt's talent; the other was born with a gift at once poetic and artistic.

Liszt — a polished barbarian — was not poetic, but furious, like the typical American Indian, whom he resembled. The familiar portrait of Liszt, with a large mouth, com-

pressed lips, and long, thick hair, would pass anywhere for that of a Sioux chief if two feathers were simply stuck in his hair and a striped blanket thrown over his shoulders. Not only is the face that of an Indian, but it has that impress of pride, of independence, and of obstinacy which belongs to the character of a chief.

Liszt was a musician who managed to lead without being able to create, and we have here a striking example of the power that attracts the crowd as compared with the influence of real art. What is most astonishing is the solid patronage that such artists receive from the hands of apparently intelligent persons in centres of art like Paris, Vienna, London, and Rome. Could anything be more fatiguing than an over-conscious musician? Think of listening to a singer or a pianist who says to himself, "I am unique!" Of all the artists, a musician should have the least affectation. Not only was Chopin free from this weakness, but his

music was like the man—it was full of the subtle charm of imaginative colour, poetic grace, and intuitive spontaneity.

Liszt, by his eccentricity, his aplomb, his advertising proclivities, kept his name before the public long after the musician himself had passed beyond the region of physical and mental exertion; and during the time that he was becoming rich and famous by these contortions in the name of art, Berlioz was starving in Paris, while Wagner was reduced to the necessity of writing dance music for beer-halls.

Liszt's technique was perfect, and he sometimes played with great feeling, but he was almost devoid of taste. His music had the characteristics of Hungarian sentiment—it was noisy, jerky, rhapsodical. He never arranged an opera or an air for the piano which he did not *disarrange* in the transposition. He was a Peter the Great among pianists, a pigmy among composers.

Chopin was a musical mystic acquainted

with the science of emotional and mystical harmony—the kind of harmony that makes poets dream and philosophers think. He had as rivals the handsome Kalkbrenner, Henri Herz, the popular finger-gymnast, and the young giant, Liszt, even then skilled in the art of attracting *le gros public* by clever puffs and eccentric demeanour. Chopin knew that these gymnasts of the keyboard were born to cater to the public, and he left them to their fate, while he retired to a select circle of his own, where art and inspiration were cultivated and cherished for their own qualities.

Liszt, whose artistic tours through Germany resembled more the advance of some mighty potentate than the progress of a simple pianist, became accustomed to see the inhabitants of certain towns quit work and take a holiday on his arrival, and he lived long enough to find himself neglected in Germany and forgotten in France. He had pampered the public with technicalities instead of art, audacity in place of inspiration,

power in lieu of genius. Just in proportion as Liszt's fame was decreasing, that of Chopin was increasing, until, at present, his temperament and his work form the most remarkable and the most abiding chapter in the history of composers for the piano. Chopin stands alone as poet-pianist, a projector of tone-visions—the only one who played better in the dark than in the light, the only one who failed as a public performer, because the public could not appreciate the delicacy and mystical distinction of his inspirations, the only one who understood the subtle laws of improvisation, who, by sheer force of originality, musical instinct, and poetic spontaneity, unconsciously called together in one compact coterie all that was best in the artistic and intellectual Paris of his day. The sentiment inspired by his improvisations was one of sincere hero-worship—a sentiment as foreign to fads and fashions as it was spontaneous and irrepressible.

THE CONSERVATION OF ENERGY

THE CONSERVATION OF ENERGY

THE secret of equanimity lies in the conservation of energy. Vain exertion and excitement weaken the body and mind, and a man can neither be sound physically nor mentally as long as he permits himself to be moved by the conflicting moods and emotions of the hour. Every troubled thought, every angry word, every excited gesture, is a weight in the balance which prevents the equipoise of intellect and reduces stamina.

It requires as much energy to hate with vigour as it does to love with passion, and more astuteness to continue in the narrow and neutral path that lies between exasperation and infatuation than is commonly manifest in the ruling of a State. Anger which is impotent enfeebles the will and diminishes

vital force; so that no wise man will harbour it except at the moments when destiny puts into his hands the means at once for the execution of justice and judgment.

Passion, hate, envy, and ambition are four things which invalidate energy. Passion limits the will to certain boundaries, hate binds the will in a vicious circle, envy nullifies and saps the secret sources of inspiration, while ambition is restless, suspicious, and apprehensive. Of all these things envy is the most pernicious, for, as a wise king has said: "A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones."

There are men of profound learning and deep insight who seem to possess every quality but one, and that one the most necessary to equanimity—the secret of avoiding that which irritates and provokes. Of the few excellent things which may be acquired by will and practice this is the most desirable. It is a sign of weakness in men

of intelligence to be moved and influenced by inimical criticism. Those who are sensitive to mockery and misrepresentation should avoid reading unfriendly criticism, while the insensitive should put even this small effort to better use. The conservation of energy consists principally in knowing how to range and regulate the little things of life. The big things soon cure or kill themselves. More strength of mind and body is wasted in the daily repetitions of the avoidable than in any other thing. Thinkers and artists make little progress while they are hampered by conflicting counsel and the acrimonious sentiments of rival schools and factions. One must live far above these things, or avoid them by circumambiency. To be swayed by them means servile imitation or decadence. To live above the elements of dissension and opposition means a spirit of independence which is almost indifference —a state which borders on a cynical disregard of the feelings of the majority in

every rank and calling. To live just beyond the reach of discord means a subtle management of daily affairs, a penetration that almost attains to clairvoyance. It means knowing the knowable, avoiding the avoidable, living in the world, but not of it. A man who wishes to conserve his energy should promenade around the arena of strife and passion, but never descend into it. As a hermit in his cave hears the howling of the storm, the rushing of swollen streams, and the crashing of giant pines, a wise man ought both to see and hear the rush of rivalry and the roar and movement of envy without being moved by the flux or reflux of change.

There is a double meaning attached to the conservation of energy: the greatest forces are the silent ones. The original intellects are those that achieve the most without being obstreperous. Force is a sort of energy which is often not even seen or heard. Power is attended with clamour and visible movement. For this reason it is always

popular. The world is impressed by what it sees, and people mistake violent gesture for sincere acting. There is no known human power that can extinguish a page of recorded truth.

In the effort to attain equanimity the sensitive find pity the most serious stumbling-block. A man who has not learned to pity himself by abstaining from the useless pitying of others will find his days full of misery. In all great cities the daily sights and sounds of the street make perpetual demands on the sense of pity. The feeling of commiseration in the minds of the sensitive comes at last to be a source of greater pain than cold and hunger are to the people who often appear more wretched than they really are. For much of the visible misery is more apparent than real. People who are not ashamed of drinking to excess, or of begging in the streets, cannot discern the demoralising effects of penury and hunger. To conserve our energies, then, requires something

more than a mere effort of the will; it means the framing of a set of rules, to be followed in the street and in the drawing-room, in the study and the counting-house—rules never to be forgotten in the hurry and excitement of business or pleasure.

In the modern intellectual world Goethe presents the most striking example of the successful storing and maintenance of energy. In the midst of war he managed to forget it, and continue his literary work. George Eliot was a wise woman, as well as a great writer. She never read the opinion of unfriendly critics. Brain-workers owe it to themselves, first of all, to avoid undue irritation; they owe it to their friends to avoid everything that detracts from equanimity; and, lastly, they owe it to unknown readers everywhere to avoid undignified discussion and unseemly denials and contradictions. The secret of the conservation of energy lies within the grasp of each individual man.

THE PSYCHIC ACTION OF GENIUS

THE PSYCHIC ACTION OF GENIUS

MEN of genius are the symbols and the finger-posts which Nature sets up here and there as indications of the mathematical and psychic progression of the visible and invisible world in which we live. The human brain is the most powerful embodiment of electro-magnetic energy of which we have any knowledge. This is why thinkers often receive simultaneous impressions regarding things of universal importance. The brain of one thinker acts as an invisible conductor to another; the interchange of psychic force is produced without conscious effort. Nature has placed her psychic batteries all over the world, in the exact positions required; the invisible conductors are at work everywhere; the magnetic currents meet and mingle or cross and recross, according to affinity or

repulsion. When the brain of genius becomes highly charged with electric energy, consciousness becomes illuminated. In such moments it arrives at the truth as by a flash, and we call it intuition; but illumination is the proper word. Consciousness is lit much as darkness is lit by a flash of lightning. At such times the intellect becomes clairvoyant. In science it discovers, in poetry it announces a rhythmic truth, in wordly affairs it attains the prophetic. Considered in its relation to material things it is mechanical. The brain acts with the precision of a well-regulated instrument; and the difference between the brain of talent and the brain of genius is the difference between an ordinary watch and a chronometer.

The personal quality of genius is anything but mechanical; it has a dual quality: in the world of invisible forces it is mechanical, in the social world it has a personality distinct and apart from all others. But the mechanical action of one harmonious brain in com-

munication with another must not be confounded with the abnormal and eccentric manifestations of hypnotic subjects. In the illuminating process of the brain, in its highest development, there is no guessing or groping after truth. Genius is a mathematical and psychic progression.

Nature builds by degrees; the intellect is developed in exact harmony with the physical law, and the one cannot exist without the other. The reason why there is so much blundering in diplomacy and statecraft is that the poorly developed brains are oftener than not placed in control of matters which only genius could hope to elucidate. But the greatest thinkers never concern themselves with local conditions and interests. There is a sort of unconscious freemasonry among the most gifted minds. The fraternal spirit is not confined to any school or nation —it is universal, for genius and provincialism are inimical. In time the provincial spirit is pushed aside by the inexorable forces of

world-development. In the highest regions of science, as in the highest regions of literature, no thought is given to what the world thinks or does. Newton and Darwin were not concerned about local prejudices when they were discovering some of the long-hidden secrets of Nature. In all manifestations of genius, whether taken singly or in groups, there is something apart from the crowd and the public. A king is not constrained to keep within the limits of a titled circle in his intercourse with society, for he may have commoners as intimate friends; but men of genius are constrained by a rigid law of nature to have as friends only those who possess an intellectual affinity for the work of genius. Frederick the Great, who had the wit and imagination of a thinker, took delight in the society of Voltaire, who possessed more wit than the king.

In the laws which govern intellectual force there is something magical. In the electric

currents that flow from one brain to another there is a force that sets at naught all other forces, overruling and dominating the seeming puissance of the physical. Invisible force is infinitely more potent than anything apparent and tangible. Perhaps if the secret forces of Nature could be divined, they would appal some minds who think that all unpleasant truth can be buried out of sight by cleverly planned codes and subtle devices. For the mystery is this: sign-posts which mark the latest development of human intelligence are invisible to the world at large, just as the farthest stars are invisible to people without telescopes. A Kepler is *en rapport* with his subject. He deals with the science of astronomy in a way the tyro cannot understand; his calculations are accurate and his reasoning just. When he announces a new discovery competent astronomers know the meaning of his symbols and his figures. His discovery stands for a fixed fact; but it remains a mystery to other minds who are

incapable of any deep, discriminating effort of reason and imagination.

What occurs in the astronomical world occurs in the world of philosophy and literature. The brains endowed with psychic energy and imagination are attracted and held by unwritten laws far more binding than those recorded in any book. Nature rises above systems and written codes; but the law of intellect now is what it was for Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. This law is acting in London and Paris as it acted in Athens and Rome. One hour's conversation with Socrates did as much for Athenian superstition as Samson's foxes did for the corn-fields of the Philistines. But whereas Samson's fox passed through the land like a fiery, flying serpent, and was a visible phenomenon, the influence of Socrates was a manifestation of hidden, intangible force, unconquerable and indestructible. No one could solve the Socratic mystery. We cannot explain the force of an electric battery

by handling it, neither could the rulers of Athens nullify the influence of Socrates by suppressing the man. When Walter Savage Landor said: "Give me ten competent minds as readers," he knew that the dynamic forces of his intellect would harmonise with the latent or active forces of ten competent minds unknown to him, and so act and react on others. He knew that the psychic waves evolved in his brain would flow on through others, fulfilling the intended mission of inexorable and immutable law. A man whose brain is a storehouse of electric force may sit quietly in an obscure corner of the world and launch his psycho-electric currents of thought in a thousand directions by what De Quincey terms a drop of ink on the point of a pen. He needs no wires, no intricate machinery, no light or dark room for the taking and developing of his mental pictures. The machinery is invisible, intangible. It was set up and regulated at the beginning of things, and the mystery of its creation has

remained an inscrutable secret. We may reason away everything else in the world; we may explain and analyse all other phenomena by study, research, and worldly knowledge—the mystery of spiritual force is one with the eternal mystery of the unknowable. This force never conforms to inferior conditions. It moves and acts in its own sphere; and the minds which desire any knowledge of it must be willing to mount towards it. To obtain any benefit from an electric battery one must come in contact with the two poles of the battery; and it is only a wise use of such an instrument which gives us any benefit. The moment we begin to tinker with it the electric current ceases and we defeat our purpose.

A new cycle begins with every new genius. Plato followed Socrates, and Aristotle followed Plato. Of these three cycles the last assumed a scientific form. Nature never moves by fits and starts. Aristotle was not possible before Plato, nor Plato before

Socrates. Out of the intuitive and the speculative, scientific knowledge is evolved and made known; for thought must precede action. Ideas rule the world, says Plato; but an idea without action is a barren thing. And so nature has ordained that ideas engender action. Out of the psychic world of Socrates and Plato issued Aristotle; out of the pen of Voltaire came the sword of Bonaparte. Perhaps of all the puerile efforts made by impotent man, the effort of criticising and explaining away the doings of this or that man of genius is the most foolish. The moment we begin to look into history, and put one name against another, that moment our efforts at moralising and sermonising appear vain and altogether void of reason. We may discover where a cycle began and where it ended, but that is all. We see Voltaire, Rousseau, and Bonaparte; we see the local revolution of 1789, and then the universal upheaval of Napoleon. We recognise ideas first, then words, then deeds;

but when we begin to criticise Bonaparte we become mere children unless we consider the forces that produced Bonaparte. We are compelled to go back and face Voltaire and all the encyclopedists who worked to bring about the Revolution. When we have done this we realise the futility of explaining away the deeds of Napoleon. If we have any conception of mathematical unity, of the cyclic action of human thought, we give up the game of psychological guess-work and accept the inexorable decrees of the hidden and unwritten laws of psycho-cyclic development. To explain away genius is to explain the unknowable. In other words, to do so implies the getting rid of scientific law and putting in its place sentiment, theory, and guess-work. And since every man has his own opinion, one would be just as proper as another.

In every country the action of genius is visible in cyclic waves. In Germany we see Kant, Goethe, Schopenhauer, Wagner, and

Nietszche. There is here no sign of chance work. The cyclic development is as marked as that of the Socratic cycle in Greece, or that of the Voltarian cycle in France; for there can be no psychical action without ideas. This is why Nature, for example, did not constitute Macaulay as a psychic centre. When, half a century ago, Macaulay said that there was not a writer living who would be read in fifty years, he spoke as a blind man in a blind world. His brain was not of the generating order; he possessed material power without the psychic energy.

Nature often ordains her cycles by threes: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle in philosophy; Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides in the drama; Mozart, Beethoven, and Wagner in music; but it is impossible to fix a limit to the duration of the cyclic action since it is impossible to tell where or how the first manifestation occurred. Such reasoning would not only take us to the dawn of history, but far into the æons of geological

formations, through the fauna and fossils of mammal and mollusk, to the first visible sign of corporeal life in the Olenellus zone, and out of that into the jelly masses without motion, into the aëriform bodies, until, once more, we face the starry heavens of astronomical science and the inexorability of the psychic principle manifest in cyclic and mathematical evolution. Kant was filled with awe when he looked at the stars and thought of the moral law; but the moral law is the psychical principle in cyclic progression. The ideas which impress us most at this epoch are very different from those which animated our ancestors. There is but one force and one meaning; but force is of untold variability. The things we see through the telescope harmonise in motion with the things visible on our own planet. All the worlds differ in character, but they are governed by the law which governs all things here. Astronomy is the science of psycho-physical motion. The

fixed stars, planets, comets, and nebulous formations have their counterparts in our little world. For human beings differ as the heavenly bodies differ; and, like the suns and planets, human beings may be divided into two classes—the luminous and the non-luminous. Groups of men are attracted and held by central minds; they revolve with mathematical precision, as the moon round the earth, and both round the sun. For the notion that we are free agents cannot be considered as scientifically demonstrable. The illusions of sight and sense cause us to think ourselves free; for without these illusions conscious existence would become unbearable. Without the light and heat of the Sun there would be no life on our planet; without the illuminating minds of genius there would be no light in the world of the intellect. The social world has its psychical suns, its spiritual planets, its satellites in every sphere of human activity and human

intercourse; but genius, which is the supremest personal force in the world of thought, is a central sun of itself, at the back of which the essence of the unknowable rules and acts in mysterious, inscrutable, and eternal law.

REFLECTIONS

REFLECTIONS

MAN is composed of matter, spirit, and soul. The body is served by the spirit, and, when we speak, the spirit shows itself as its servant and its slave. The spirit puts into words all that is corporal—hasty opinions and worldly judgments. The soul speaks only by silent expression. Words are always more or less dangerous, considering their connection with the spirit and the body. Spoken sentiments are seldom just what the soul would say. The more one gesticulates, explains, expostulates, the more the soul retires and hides itself. In a conversation we do not see the real man, but his double, which represents him more in masquerade than in truth, for in a conversation there are too many smiles, too much affability, flattery, bad humour,

or vehemence. To judge a face from the grimaces of a conversation is to deceive one's self as to the true nature of the man. The spirit and soul are two; how, then, can we understand by his language alone the man who thinks and feels profoundly? The body, with its vanities and its passions, is continually in evidence—impossible to hide it or deny it. And the body has so many needs, while the soul has so few; and the double is always there, ever ready to mystify, to disconcert, to distract, that the world may not divine the mysteries of the soul.

A person seated alone somewhere, meditating, carries in his face a psychic expression. This expression is the man himself. The moment another person comes upon the scene the expression changes and the double appears. The soul retires, and the spirit, restless, loquacious, and vain, holds its court, evoking the artifice of words, the egoistic subterfuges of the day, of circum-

stances, of exterior existence. Likewise, when one has received a disagreeable impression from a wise and good man, it is the double that one has seen and heard, not the man himself. From this source spring half the contradictions, the apparent paradoxes, and the personal misunderstandings of life.

Innumerable false conceptions arise from the fact that we ignore the part played by the double. The soul is the quintessential character of the man, but the double is volatile and delusive, therefore we are continually deceived by appearances. The soul never asserts nor manifests itself; it is neither vague nor vehement; it never gropes about, but encounters and takes possession, acting through intuition and attraction, and not through will and artifice.

Most of the puerile systems in the world arise from the fact that the manifestations of the double have been taken for those of the soul. Systems, generally, have proved vain and futile since they are commonly derived

from the sentiments and sensations engendered by the double. Each soul is personal in itself, stands alone, invincible.

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All is mystery. Whatever we do we cannot escape that fact. This is the fundamental law which causes the illusion of progress and a constant desire to acquire more knowledge, to seek the unseen, the unheard, the unknown. Mystery engenders illusion—the most wonderful and subtle of all the primordial elements. Everything revolves or reposes on illusion; it is the action exercised on the mind by some person or some thing, and we are always under its influence, whether it be good or bad or indifferent.

Indefinable though they be, illusions are, nevertheless, realities. The secret and mysterious relations of things, psychological and magnetic influences, are, in truth, solidly based on facts, and are of the greatest profundity. But this seems never to have

occupied the attention of philosophers. They know nothing of it, though they live in this element, though they daily feel the effects of its influences, and from time to time are even exalted by its ecstatic manifestations. Take, for example, the illusion of colour, of light, of shade. In itself it is of little import—an effect produced on the mind; this effect is illusion, in the general sense of the word; we see the effects, or we feel them, in the same way as we feel pleasure or aversion in listening to certain music.

Love, as a passion, also depends on this psychological influence. It is an all-powerful element, and, while only an illusion, it is one of the great mysteries, never quite explainable, for in its essence it is both mystical and absolute.

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In great events, like love and war, surprises are fatal. An army that sleeps, and is surprised by the enemy, is lost; but in

love there are a hundred-fold more opportunities for the unexpected to play a fatal part. The unexpected is the enemy that lies in wait for those who are susceptible to the tender passion, and that in a thousand forms and aspects night and day.

It is in the first place through the sight that surprise acts most fatally on the imagination. The eyes are struck with a new face, then the heart is attained by an unlooked-for manifestation of sympathy, then one's egotism is captured by a sudden and subtle flattery, uniting itself to all the other elements of psychological love to cajole, fascinate, and reduce the victim to a state of abject submission; after which one lives in a world of illusions, where appearance is everything, where reason is hypnotised by the imagination, and, in fact, no longer exists, where sentiment dominates will, leaving the body like a ship without a rudder.

It is especially in places that are lighted

by shaded lamps—where illusion floats between the pink light and the suggestive shadows—that love triumphs through surprise. There are other dangerous places, but this one is where the victim is entrapped with the greatest facility. This is the home of the psychological spider that lies in wait for the unsuspecting fly which is naïve enough to enter.

The vanity engendered by wealth produces illusions even greater than those produced by love. It is possible for a woman without beauty or extraordinary qualities of mind and heart to believe that she possesses the power to charm, and, in fact, often does charm; but the influence that she attributes to her wealth renders her susceptible to emotions and follies that love would never produce.

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When Bonaparte gave away kingdoms to the first-comer a fatal step was taken towards a development of materialism in its worst form. Selfish ambitions, morbid greed, love

of display, took possession of a class of newly created nobles, who, in their intense egoism, held back or smothered the higher instincts of the more cultured and intelligent classes. The example set by Bonaparte had its effect, and a scramble for social position began which was felt everywhere in France, even among the most exclusive and independent aristocrats. It was found that the new nobles were mere sticks, without so much as the common sense displayed by shopkeepers and wine-dealers; but they lived in splendour, they possessed millions, they could buy and they could sell, so riches came to be regarded as the one thing needful. The evil spread to Germany; it entered Russia, and gave us nihilism; it passed into England and gave us commercial know-nothingism.

The ever-recurring political revolution has its immediate effect on every phase of philosophy, art, and literature. While it sets aside the old and effete, it destroys the

ideals of young aspirants; while it exiles the tyrant, the poet and the thinker may starve. The periodical revolution never gets rid of the social and moral incubus of knaves and imbeciles.

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Perhaps there is no class so hopelessly decadent as the typical wealthy parvenu. Religion is kept up as a form of respectability, insignificant sums are given here and there, not for conscience' sake, but as peace offerings thrown to the public, much as a fleeing Russian would throw a pig from his sleigh to a pack of hungry wolves.

The purse-proud parvenu, whose wealth is synonymous with ignorance, vainly seeks distinction through ostentatious deeds of indiscriminate charity; and blind vulgarity will not let him see that money lavished on undeserving persons and questionable things serves only to attract fresh attention to the mental sterility of the giver, while the recipients, in most cases better judges of

human nature than the donor, mingle compliments full of irony with feelings of contemptuous gratitude.

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Riches united to egoism create in the minds of the delicate a feeling of repugnance which touches on fear; one flies from the egoists who pride themselves on their fortune as from the tyrants who seek not only the rights but the life of others.

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Nothing revives our waning illusions like the promise of a life which flatters our weaknesses.

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There are persons who choose their religion as they choose their garments: that one is preferred which flatters their vanity most. A belief in reincarnation is at once the most easy and the most flattering.

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The difference between the modern agnostic and the modern spiritist is that

the first is waiting to see and learn, the second waiting to see and feel.

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The more one ignores the laws that govern interior and spiritual life, the more one is crushed by the power and the number of fatidical influences.

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As long as the world lasts, physical and mental antipathies will prove a question of social and intellectual discord. That inscrutable power which we call magnetism will always play the principal rôle in the affairs of man. We are attracted or repelled by certain persons, often without knowing why, and the most secret, the most simple laws of nature surpass in justice and comprehension the best laws made by society. An attraction of the heart and the intellect makes us forget physical deformity, ugliness, and the discrepancies of age, but a mere corporal attachment can never atone for the lack of intellectual affinity The

raison d'être of the different schools in art, philosophy, and literature is founded on the natural laws of attraction and repulsion. The world would be insupportable were each person left to think and act alone.

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Sentiments and opinions are the only things which a man can rightly claim as his own, because these belong to his temperament. An idea, if it possesses a vital germ of truth, may be conceived spontaneously by a thousand minds at the same time, thus rendering what we call an original idea, in the imagination of any one mind, a thing beyond the possibility of proof. A real idea lies within the domain of the mathematical, and is, therefore, an eternal fixture in the essence of things. We come upon ideas in two ways—by experiment and by intuition.

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Man is a "religious animal," say the philosophers. Here the word "animal"

suggests ironical humour. Essay to explain something metaphysical, and you at once discover that it is not to be explained.

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In these pragmatic times there is a personal duality about the man of talent which renders his life a source of much mystification and futile criticism. In our intercourse with him we are at first interested, than mystified, then disappointed. In his work he is poetic and philosophical; in his manners usually commonplace. The descent from the ideal to the real shocks our ideas of the fitness of things, and we at last come to believe that the man of talent, in our day, is as sordid as he is entertaining.

However, when we go to the depths of this intellectual enigma we find that the fault rests not with the man but with the age. Modern society compels the serious writer to live and work in two conflicting elements, wholly at variance with the idea of unity. To-day, in his study, our author is charming;

to-morrow he disenchants us in the street. The material and the mediocre everywhere conflict with the spiritual and the artistic. At one moment he is responsive, sympathetic, enthusiastic; at another, nonchalant, unsympathetic, *blasé*. In our sentiments of admiration there is little place left for that reasonable judgment which ought to tell us that he is—like all other human beings—a victim of conditions and circumstances, a creature of habit, conforming to certain natural laws and transitory fashions which exist in the present state of society, and which rule us all with an iron hand. We must not blame him if he does not always and everywhere harmonise with our ideas of what he should be, but we must remember that "the world is a lie," that a decadent society has no place in its morbid economy for thinkers and philosophers, and that, moreover, this is an age of buying and selling, of gossip and curiosity, which offers a poor entertainment to the man of thought and

feeling, who is forced to live a dual life in order to be at once a minister to men's ideal wants and a participant in their worldly commodities.

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Poetry is the flower of passion, music is the perfume; and poets and musicians are more intimately connected than the painter is to either. Music and poetry are two things that fall to the level of mediocrity if they do not awaken a sentiment of the Infinite. Shelley reminds me of Wagner, not only by his lyrical perfection, but also by his banality the moment he ceases to be inspired. Shelley, like Wagner, often falls into the most insipid mediocrity. Although the most uneven of all the English poets, he is the most original and the most fascinating. No one else has succeeded in combining the mystical idea and the lyrical form with such unity and harmony. Shelley soars to the empyrean; he ascends to a region where sentiment, emotion, thought, and form are one.

Certain poems of Keats owe their perfec-

tion to a union of art, sentiment, and beauty, while in Shelley there is an indefinable quality which renders one heedless of the æsthetic element; the artist is no longer considered, but the soul, the intangible element of things, and, in consequence, the reality. It is no longer a question of artistic work, but of a mystical revelation of the Infinite, which one would have thought inexpressible, even in poetry.

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Poetry is passion illuminated by imagination and regulated by art.

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Poetry affects the heart and the mind; music affects the heart and the nerves. The former has more hold on man, and its *raison d'être* rests on a more solid foundation.

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Music awakens in us a sentiment of the Infinite; but mingled with this sentiment is an ineffable sadness, for music is still another mode of the illusory. The soul,

first awakened, then rendered clairvoyant by harmonic rhythm, recognises during a few moments the unutterable imponderability of the things that are. While rejoicing, it confesses its powerlessness. This explains the short duration of impressions produced by music, which are, however, for the moment more penetrating than those produced by poetry.

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Carried to its utmost limits, music produces one of two impressions—resignation, which calms (Beethoven), or dramatic action, which excites (Wagner).

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Music is a metaphysical illusion, whose secrets are often felt but never uttered.

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The greatest poets have been those who studied least, but who possessed a certain faculty of divining the mysterious. Application, which fortifies the intellect, kills imagination, for in rendering the mind

positive it clips the wings of fantasy. Hence, the more a poet studies his style the more he limits his creative power.

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Imagination is the moonlight of the soul, where reason wanders unbridled 'twixt illusion and reality.

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Of all tasks, that of imitating the style of another is the most difficult, the most futile, and the most ungrateful. For "the style is the man," and he who imitates attempts a kind of *dédoublement* of the soul that is like a defiance to Nature. Those whom we call "masters," are so from the fact that they have remained themselves in spite of all temptation to swerve from the path which Nature intended them to follow.

Style is a siren who charms more by her melody than by her words. The writers who charm us most do not resemble the diamond whose value lies in mere bulk, but the one whose facets reflect the clear-

est light. It is the difference between preponderation and quality. Such writers are almost always found where the critical explorer least expects them. They are analogous to those rare denizens of the deep that live in the silence and the shadow of profound waters, eluding the most patient and adroit fishermen, only mounting to the surface at certain hours of the day, certain seasons of the year, certain periods of a mystic cycle.

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Writers like Poe and De Quincey unite the critical with the poetic faculty, so that they are critics of their own work as well as of that of others, while in Goethe and Carlyle we see writers who often think the least when they do the most. When thinkers and artists attain a certain degree of knowledge, every attempt to mount higher leads them towards that desert of the mind called intellectual perfection. Without restraint, an element is reached where the soul is

consumed by perpetual thirst, and where illusions assume the form of the mirage.

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The modern statue says: "Behold, here I am!" Heroism is represented by bombast, beauty by pose, contemplation by grimace.

The Greek statute is unconscious—alone perfect and comprehensible, as well from its form as from its repose. Here is no school; it is a truth which charms by a divine expression of the Beautiful, at once harmonious and universal. It is Nature chiselled by the artist, without affectation and without *arrière-pensée.* Every sculptor who leaves this Greek simplicity becomes affected, weak, and false.

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Raphael: a subject, a study; Angelo: a problem, a philosophy; the first, the ideal artist; the second, the ideal artist-poet. Raphael: simple, expressive, and beautiful; Angelo: passionate, powerful, and universal. It is the difference between the highest art

and the highest genius. The one is a school, the other a university.

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The difference between the galleries of Munich and Dresden is as marked as that between Rubens and Raphael. The artistic tone of the gallery of Dresden is given by the incomparable *Sistina Madonna*, which dominates the ensemble like some mystic spirit, presiding and governing with an inborn distinction, delicate, penetrating, absorbing. Of all the art galleries this one is the most equal in composition, the most harmonious in colour. One is struck by the quality of the pictures. Distinction and sincerity are manifest in all the rooms; one walks in an element of inspiration. Here it is the artist who presides; at Munich it is the painter. The gallery of Dresden is for the poet, the artist, the connoisseur; that of Munich is for the public.

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There exist as many false gods in art as existed in past ages in religion. Italy

possesses the greatest number of these false gods, and it is the English and the Germans who have contributed most to the conservation and propagation of their cult.

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There are many things which a young man can do better than a middle-aged or elderly man. In every kind of art which requires a free play of imagination, passion, and enthusiasm, the young man will be found more at home than the mind of maturer years. But the critical faculties come into play just at the period when enthusiasm and illusion begin to wane. The critical faculties may be so developed at the age of thirty that sentiment and passion cannot hinder correct judgment, but such instances are extremely rare. Indeed, they only exist where there is some marked manifestation of philosophical and artistic insight akin to intuition.

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Men are judged more by the quality than by the quantity of their thoughts and acts;

and this rule applies with as much force to the deeds of statesmen and conquerors as it does to the productions of the thinker and the artist. Look where we may we find that when quality is distilled from quantity there remains a surprising amount of superfluous work, vain attempts at additional glory, false calculations of permanent worth, and foolish demands for the applause of posterity. We say a man has lived too long when he has done too much. Success in the sphere of intellectuality is analogous to success in commerce—first results create an ambitious appetite for another fruitful effort. The successful writer, whose first impressions have come unsought, after causing flattering comment from the public, is soon enveloped in the meshes of imaginary conditions which only exist in the individual. It is a phase of intellectual reaction which we can understand but cannot easily explain.

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The moment we cross another's threshold

we leave our personality at the door, like the Mussulman who takes off his sandals before entering the mosque. For every man is a god in his own house, and on entering the house of a stranger we put ourselves under the domination of another god. Friend or enemy, we render him homage as long as we remain. This is why we say: "You did me the honour of paying me a visit"; for the most stupid feel that no honour could equal the loss of one's personality, even for an hour. If you doubt the truth of this, call on your acquaintances a day or two after having received them as guests, and you will be surprised at the confident and authoritative air of these same people who, the other day, at your house, showed you so much deference. You feel that, whether you like it or not, you, in your turn, have left your aplomb at the door, and that this time it is for you to bend before a host with an eye full of confidence, of easy mien, and free from all constraint.

Reflections

The greatest proof of our admiration is to pass voluntarily some time under the domination of another, particularly if that person be gifted. In this case the word "master" takes a double sense—master in the intellectual world, and *our* master as long as we are in his house.

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